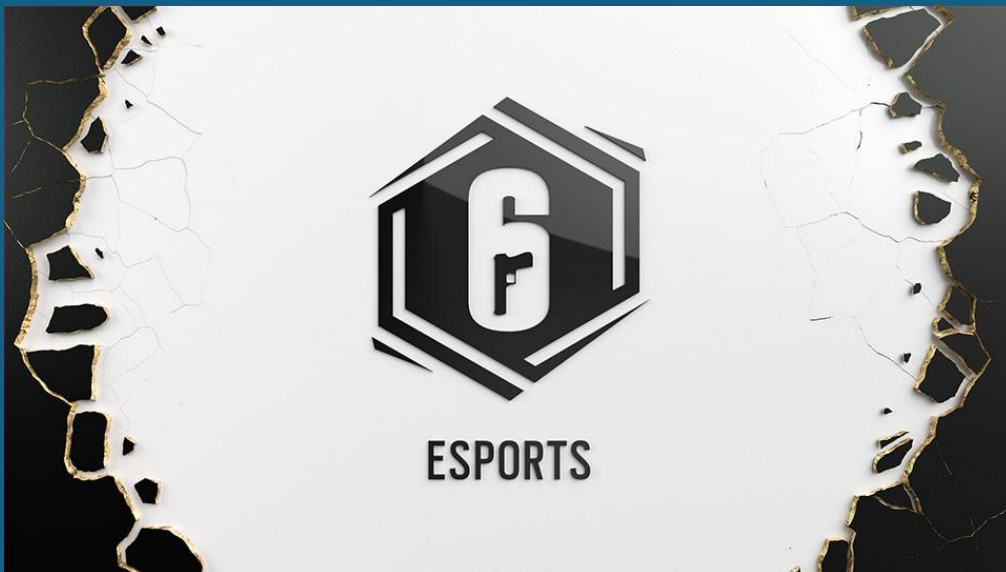


MIKOLAJ MACKO

Rainbow Six Siege Esports Landscape, Pro-League Circuit its profitability and games future within the esports environment.



Bachelor's degree in
Esports Business
Autumn/Spring 2025

Abstract

Author: Macko Mikolaj

Title of publication: Rainbow Six Siege Esports Environment and Games Profitability and Future Prospects.

Degree Title: Bachelor of Business, Esports Business

Keywords: profitability, future, esports ecosystem, pro league, evolution, renaissance

Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six Siege* is a tactical first-person shooter released by Ubisoft in 2015 that has evolved into one of the most prominent long-term live-service titles in the esports industry. Unlike traditional fast-paced shooters, *Rainbow Six Siege* emphasises tactical planning, teamwork, and environmental destruction, which has contributed to the development of a dedicated competitive community and a globally recognised esports ecosystem. This thesis examines the long-term sustainability of *Rainbow Six Siege* by analysing its competitive structure, monetisation strategy, player engagement, and esports viewership trends.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from publicly available player-count databases and esports viewership platforms with qualitative analysis of developer communications, patch notes, and industry publications. Key areas of focus include the evolution of the professional esports structure, the impact of monetisation systems such as cosmetic microtransactions and the R6 Share revenue programme, and the role of continuous gameplay updates in maintaining player retention. Particular attention is given to the restructuring of the competitive ecosystem under BLAST and the significance of flagship tournaments such as the Six Invitational.

Findings indicate that *Rainbow Six Siege* has maintained strong commercial performance and consistent esports viewership despite its age, supported by a robust live-service model and ongoing developer commitment. The introduction of *Siege X* and the planned transition toward a free-to-play model represent a major strategic shift with the potential to expand the player base and reinforce long-term sustainability. While challenges remain—including onboarding complexity, anti-cheat demands, and balancing depth—the overall analysis suggests that *Rainbow Six Siege* is well positioned to remain a viable and competitive esport in the future.

Contents

Abstract	1
Author: Macko Mikolaj	1
Title of publication: Rainbow Six Siege Esports Environment and Games Profitability and Future Prospects.	1
Degree Title: Bachelor of Business, Esports Business	1
Keywords: profitability, future, esports ecosystem, pro league, evolution, renaissance	1
1.Introduction	5
2.Background	7
3.Research Problem	9
Research Questions	9
Research Objectives	10
4.Methodology	10
5.1 Research design	11
5.Theoretical Background	15
5.1 Brief history of the game.....	15
5.2Features that attract players to R6	16
R6s 10 year long history with each season	19
Beginning (Year 1-Year3)	21
Middle/some popularity within games industry (Year 4-Year7)	23
Rebirth/Renaissance of R6 Siege(Year 8-Year10)	27
Summary	30
Changes that shaped the game	31
Pro League	34
Regions and Format changes (Rainbow Six Siege Pro League)	38
Rainbow Six Esports	41
Monetization and games sales and Financial Performance	43
6.Results.....	52
6.1 Player count numbers	52
6.2 R6 viewership and position within esports	55
2024 SI Viewership (Siege Invitational) vs previous events.....	56
2025 SI Montreal	56

2025 SI viewership statistics	57
7.1 Player Population Trends	58
7.2 Esports Viewership Performance	58
7.3 Gameplay and Meta Evolution	59
7.4 Monetisation and Financial Performance	59
7.5. Competitive Structure and Esports Development	59
7.6 Conceptual Framework of Rainbow Six Siege Sustainability and Profitability	60
7.Conclusion.....	61
7.1 Answers to Research Questions	62
7.2 Achievement of Research Objectives	62
Future Research	63
8.References	64
Appendices	66

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1 GAMES NEW LOGO FOR ITS 10TH YEAR TITLED SIEGE X	6
FIGURE 2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	10
FIGURE 3 METHODOLOGY	14
FIGURE 4 NEW GAME MODE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR YEAR 10 SEASON 2	15
FIGURE 14 IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSSPLAY AND CROSS-PROGRESSION	20
FIGURE 15 YEAR 10 PLANNED CONTENT	29
FIGURE 16 DETAILED IMAGE SHOWING CHANGES IN MOST OF THE SEASONS	30
FIGURE 17 OFFICIAL LOGO FOR RAINBOW SIX SIEGE PRO LEAGUE	34
FIGURE 18 SIEGE INVITATIONAL LOGO	35
FIGURE 19 LOGO CHANGE FORM PRO LEAGUE TO R6 ESPORTS	37
FIGURE 20 2024/2025 REGIONALISATION INTO MULTIPLE LEAGUES	38
FIGURE 21 2021 NORTH AMERICAN LEAGUE ANNOUNCEMENT	39
FIGURE 22 EXAMPLE OF A REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE 2021 EUROPEAN LEAGUE	39
FIGURE 23 GLOBAL SEASON 2023 SHOWING STAGES, OFF-SEASONS, MAJORS/ INVITATIONAL QUALIFIERS	40
FIGURE 24 CURRENCY PACKS PLAYERS CAN BUY	43
FIGURE 25 HIGHLIGHTS FORM THE SHOP	44
FIGURE 26 NEW ESPORTS BUNDLES CALLED LEGACY SETS	45
FIGURE 27 PREMIUM SKIN GHOST IN THE SHELL	45
FIGURE 28 MEMBERSHIP	46
FIGURE 29 PARAGON ELITE SKIN	47
FIGURE 30 TIER 1 ORGANISATION COSMETICS	48
FIGURE 31 TIER 2 ORGANISATION BUNDLES	49
FIGURE 32 TIER 3 ORGANISATION BUNDLE	49
FIGURE 33 1ST QUARTER 2025-26 SALES	50
<i>FIGURE 25 PLAYER COUNT DATING 2016-2025</i>	52
<i>FIGURE 26 PLAYER COUNT FROM APRIL 2024 TO APRIL 2025</i>	52
<i>FIGURE 27 PLYER COUNT NUMBERS WITH MUCH MORE DETAILED NUMBERS</i>	53
<i>FIGURE 28 LATEST PLAYER COUNT STATISTICS</i>	54
<i>FIGURE 29 LINE CHART SHOWING PLAYER COUNT FROM APRIL TO DECEMBER</i>	54
<i>FIGURE 30 TOP 20 ESPORTS GAMES IN TERMS OF VIEWERSHIP</i>	55
<i>FIGURE 31 2024 SI VIEWERSHIP STATS</i>	56
<i>FIGURE 32 MOST RECENT SI VIEWER COUNT</i>	56
<i>FIGURE 33 TOP 5 SIS</i>	57

1. Introduction

Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six Siege* is a tactical first-person shooter developed by Ubisoft and released in December 2015. Unlike many contemporary shooters that prioritise fast movement and mechanical reflexes, *Rainbow Six Siege* is built around methodical gameplay, environmental destruction, and coordinated team-based strategy. Players assume the roles of unique "operators," each equipped with specialised abilities that encourage tactical planning, communication, and role-based play. These design principles have allowed *Rainbow Six Siege* to distinguish itself within the competitive first-person shooter genre and cultivate a highly dedicated player community.

Despite a modest and technically unstable launch, *Rainbow Six Siege* has undergone significant transformation over the past decade. Ubisoft adopted a long-term live-service development model, delivering regular seasonal updates that introduced new operators, reworked maps, gameplay balancing changes, and systemic improvements. Key interventions, such as *Operation Health*, addressed foundational technical issues and played a crucial role in stabilising the game's infrastructure and restoring player confidence. Over time, these sustained development efforts enabled the game to grow both commercially and competitively, positioning it as one of Ubisoft's most successful franchises.

Alongside its gameplay evolution, *Rainbow Six Siege* has developed a comprehensive esports ecosystem. What began as a relatively small competitive scene has expanded into a global structure featuring regional leagues, international majors, and an annual world championship event known as the Six Invitational. The competitive environment has undergone several structural changes, most notably the transition from a centrally managed Pro League to a regionalised system operated in partnership with BLAST. This shift aimed to improve sustainability, regional representation, and production quality while aligning the game's esports model with industry standards.

The continued relevance of *Rainbow Six Siege* is particularly notable given the competitive and rapidly changing nature of the esports industry. Many multiplayer titles experience declining player engagement after only a few years; however, *Rainbow Six Siege* has maintained a stable player base and consistent esports viewership for nearly a decade. This longevity raises important questions regarding the factors that contribute to sustainable live-service games and long-term esports success. In particular, the effectiveness of Ubisoft's monetisation strategy—centred on cosmetic microtransactions, battle passes, and the R6 Share revenue-sharing programme—warrants examination, as it directly supports both continued development and esports organisations.

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the long-term sustainability of *Rainbow Six Siege* as both a commercial product and a competitive sport. The study focuses on four key areas: player engagement and population trends, esports viewership and competitive structure, monetisation and financial performance, and the impact of continuous gameplay updates on competitive integrity. Additionally, this research examines the significance of *Siege X*, a major overhaul announced for 2025 that introduces extensive technical improvements and signals a transition toward a free-to-play model. This strategic shift represents a potential turning point for the game, with implications for player acquisition, matchmaking health, and competitive balance.

To address these objectives, the thesis employs a mixed-methods research approach using publicly available quantitative data and qualitative secondary sources. Player-count statistics, esports viewership metrics, and financial disclosures are analysed alongside developer communications and

industry reporting. The study does not seek to predict exact future outcomes but instead evaluates likely scenarios for the game's continued development based on observed trends and structural changes.

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter Two provides a theoretical and contextual background, outlining the historical development of *Rainbow Six Siege*, its gameplay design, and the evolution of its esports ecosystem. Chapter Three explains the research methodology and data sources used in the study. Chapter Four presents the results of the analysis, including player trends, viewership statistics, and financial findings. Chapter Five discusses these results in greater depth, analysing their implications for sustainability and competitive integrity. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the thesis by summarising key findings and outlining the future prospects of *Rainbow Six Siege* within the esports industry.



Figure 1 Games new logo for its 10th year titled *Siege X*

2. Background

2.1 Overview of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege is a tactical first-person shooter developed by Ubisoft and released in 2015. The game focuses on close-quarters combat, teamwork, and tactical decision-making rather than fast-paced movement or individual mechanical skill. Players choose from a range of operators, each with unique abilities and equipment that influence how a round is played. This operator-based system encourages coordinated team play and strategic planning, particularly in competitive environments.

One of the defining features of *Rainbow Six Siege* is its emphasis on environmental destruction. Walls, floors, and ceilings can be breached, allowing players to create new lines of sight and alter the layout of a map during a match. Combined with the round-based format and the absence of respawns, this design places a strong emphasis on planning, communication, and adaptability. These elements have contributed to the game's long-term appeal and its suitability as a competitive esport.

2.2 Live-Service Development Model

Unlike many traditional video games, *Rainbow Six Siege* operates as a live-service title. Rather than releasing sequels, Ubisoft has continuously updated the game through seasonal content, gameplay balancing, and technical improvements. New operators, map reworks, and system updates are introduced regularly, allowing the game to evolve alongside its player base.

A notable moment in the game's development was the introduction of *Operation Health*, which prioritised technical stability and performance over new content. This update addressed major issues related to servers, hit registration, and overall reliability, and helped establish a foundation for long-term sustainability. The live-service approach has been central to keeping *Rainbow Six Siege* relevant in a competitive market where many multiplayer games experience declining engagement after only a few years.

2.3 Esports Ecosystem

The competitive scene of *Rainbow Six Siege* has grown significantly since the game's early years. What began as a relatively small professional league developed into a structured global ecosystem featuring regional leagues, international majors, and the annual Six Invitational world championship. Over time, Ubisoft restructured the competitive system to improve sustainability and consistency.

The partnership with BLAST marked a major change in how *Rainbow Six Siege* esports is organised. The introduction of regional leagues helped strengthen local competition while maintaining international events that showcase the highest level of play. The Six Invitational remains the most important tournament in the calendar, regularly attracting the highest viewership and representing the peak of competitive achievement within the game.

2.4 Monetisation and Esports Support

Monetisation in *Rainbow Six Siege* is primarily based on cosmetic microtransactions, seasonal battle passes, and optional premium content. These systems are designed to avoid providing gameplay advantages, which helps preserve competitive fairness. This approach has been generally accepted by the player base and supports long-term revenue generation.

An important aspect of monetisation is the R6 Share programme, which allows esports organisations to receive a share of revenue from team-branded in-game items. This system provides financial support for professional teams and helps stabilise the competitive ecosystem. Revenue generated through these methods contributes to continued development, esports operations, and prize pools.

2.5 Player Engagement and Competitive Integrity

Sustaining player engagement is essential to the long-term success of *Rainbow Six Siege*. Ubisoft has placed significant emphasis on maintaining competitive integrity through regular balance changes, operator reworks, and anti-cheat measures. These efforts aim to ensure that both casual and professional players experience a fair and competitive environment.

However, the increasing complexity of the game presents challenges, particularly for new players. As more operators and mechanics are introduced, onboarding becomes more difficult. This issue is especially relevant in the context of *Siege X* and the planned transition toward a free-to-play model, which is expected to attract a larger and more diverse player base. Addressing accessibility while maintaining depth remains a key challenge for the game's future.

3. Research Problem

The esports industry is characterised by rapid growth but also high levels of instability, with many competitive games experiencing a decline in player engagement and professional support within a few years of release. Maintaining long-term sustainability as both a live-service game and an esports presents significant challenges, particularly as player expectations, monetisation practices, and competitive structures evolve.

Despite being released in 2015, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege has remained commercially successful and competitively relevant for nearly a decade. However, the factors that have contributed to its longevity—such as live-service development, monetisation strategies, and esports restructuring—have not been examined in detail within a single focused case study. In addition, the announced transition toward a free-to-play model through Siege X introduces new uncertainties regarding player retention, competitive integrity, and esports sustainability.

The research problem addressed in this thesis is therefore to understand how and why Rainbow Six Siege has sustained long-term relevance as a live-service game and esports, and whether its current development trajectory positions it for continued success in the future.

Research Questions

Dissertation is guided by following research questions:

1. What are the main factors that have contributed to the long-term sustainability of Rainbow Six Siege since its release in 2015?
2. How have live-service developments and improvements influenced player engagement and retention over time?
3. In what ways has the evolution of the esports ecosystem affected competitive stability and viewership?
4. How effective are the games monetisation strategies in supporting long-term development and esports infrastructure?
5. What potential impact could the transition to a free-to-play model(Siege X) have on player engagement and competitive integrity.

These questions are constructed to be addressed through the analysis of player data, esports viewership, financial information and developer communications.

Research Objectives

The aim of this research is as follows:

1. Analyse player engagement trends in Rainbow Six Siege using publicly available player data.
2. Evaluate the development of the games esports ecosystem, including changes in competitive/pro league structure and tournament organisation.
3. Examine the role of monetisation systems, such as cosmetic microtransactions and the R6 Share programme, in supporting long-term sustainability.
4. Assess the relationship between continuous gameplay updates and competitive integrity, including balance changes and anti-cheat measures.
5. Evaluate the potential implications of the free-to-play transition for the future sustainability of Rainbow Six Siege as an esports.



Figure 2 research objectives

4. Methodology

Methodology chapter outlines the research design and methods used to evaluate the long-term sustainability, esports ecosystem and commercial performance of Tom Clancys Rainbow Six Siege. Due to the exploratory nature of the study and the reliance on publicly

available data, a mixed-methods approach was utilised. This methodology combines quantitative analysis of player and viewership data with qualitative analysis of secondary sources such as developer communications and industry publications.

5.1 Research design

The study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a detailed analysis of Rainbow Six Siege. Quantitative data enables the identification of measurable trends in player engagement and esports viewership, while qualitative analysis allows for contextual interpretation of game development decisions, competitive structure changes and monetization strategies

This approach is particularly suitable for esports research, as it captures both numeral performance indicators and the underlying design and organisational factors that influence long-term sustainability.

4.2 Inductive Research Approach

This dissertation implement an inductive research approach to supplement the mixed-methods design. This path is appropriate where the research seeks to derive patterns, themes, and interpretations directly from observed data rather than testing predefined hypotheses

In reference to this thesis, induction is primarily applied to the qualitative analysis of developer communications, esports structural changes, an gameplay evolution. Instead of fixed casual relationships, the investigation allows for recurring themes, these are: sustainability strategies, competitive integrity, monetisation logistics, and ecosystem restructuring- all of these emerge organically from the data.

This process involved systematic review of secondary qualitative sources, including Ubisoft developer blogs, patch notes, esports announcements, industry commentary. Through repeated comparison of these materials, thematic patterns were discovered and used to interpret broader trends within Rainbow Six Sieges long-term development.

The inductive approach is appropriate for use in esports case studies, where industry practices evolve at a rapid rate with these rapid changes and rigid theoretical models will not fully capture real-world dynamics. By grounding analysis in observed evidence, the study ensures that conclusions regarding sustainability and future viability are data driven and context sensitive.

This inductive logic supports the quantitative finding by providing explanatory depth, allowing numerical trends in player engagement, viewership, and monetisation to be understood within their organizational and design context.

4.3. Data Collection Methods

4.3.1 Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was collected from publicly available third-party platforms and official disclosures, including:

- Player population data sourced from SteamChart, used to analyse trends in concurrent players over time .
- Esports viewership data obtained from ESCharts, focusing on peak viewers, average viewers, and total hours watched for major tournaments such as Six Invitational, Blast Majors, and regional leagues.
- Financial data drawn from Ubisoft's quarterly and annual financial reports published through Euronext and Nasdaq, providing insight into revenue trends and digital monetisation performance.

These datasets were selected due to their widespread use in both academic research and industry analysis

4.3.2 Qualitative data

Qualitative data was gathered from a range of secondary sources, including:

- Ubisoft developer blogs, patch notes and official roadmap announcements
- Public statements and interviews involving Ubisoft developers and esports partners
- Industry news articles and analytical reports related to Rainbow Six Siege esports
- Community-facing updates addressing gameplay balance, anti-cheat systems, and competitive reforms

These sources provided contextual understanding of how gameplay changes and structural decisions influenced both casual and competitive play.

4.4 Data Analysis Methods

The synthesis of engagement, esports, monetisation, and gameplay finding informed the inductive development of a conceptual sustainability framework presented in **Section 7.6**

4.4.1 Trend Analysis

Trend analysis was applied to quantitative datasets to identify long-term patterns:

- Player population stability and growth
- Esports viewership fluctuations across seasons and events
- Engagement changes following major updates or competitive restructures

This allowed for correlation between game updates, esports milestones and changes in player or viewer behaviour.

4.4.2 Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis was used to examine:

- Differences between early and modern competitive formats
- Pre-Blast and Blast-operated esports structures

- Pay-to play and free-to-play access models within the context of live-service games

This method provided insight into how structural and strategic changes impacted the sustainability.

4.4.3 Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was conducted on developer communications and industry reporting to identify recurring themes related to:

- Competitive integrity
- Player retention strategies
- Monetisation and revenue-sharing models
- Anti-cheat enforcement and gameplay balance.

This analysis helped interpret quantitative findings within the broader design and organisational context.

This research links each dataset directly to the research questions. Player-count statistics are used to evaluate long-term engagement and sustainability. Esports viewership metrics assess the stability and relevance of the competitive ecosystem. Monetisation information is analysed to determine whether revenue structures support continued development. Qualitative developer communications are interpreted inductively to explain how design and organisational decisions influence these measurable outcomes. Throughout this structured linkage, all collected data directly contributes to answering the research questions.

The inductive analysis further informed the development of a conceptual framework that explains the relationships between engagement, monetisation, esports structure, and long-term profitability in Rainbow Six Siege (see Figure)

4.5 Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the research is supported by the use of established and widely recognised data sources such as SteamCharts, ESCharts, and official Ubisoft financial reports. While third-party platforms provide estimates rather than exact figures, consistency across multiple sources enhances data credibility.

Validity is reinforced through data triangulation, combining multiple data types and sources to ensure that conclusions are not based on isolated metrics. However, limitations remain due to the absence of proprietary internal data.

4.6 Limitations

Several limitations need to be acknowledged:

- Platform limitations: SteamCharts reflects PC player data only, console populations are not fully represented.

- Financial transparency: Ubisoft does not publish detailed, game-specific revenue breakdowns, requiring reliance on estimates and broader financial disclosures.
- Rapid game evolution: Ongoing updates mean that some findings may become outdated as new systems are introduced.
- Lack of primary interviews: The study relies solely on secondary data, as no direct interviews were conducted.

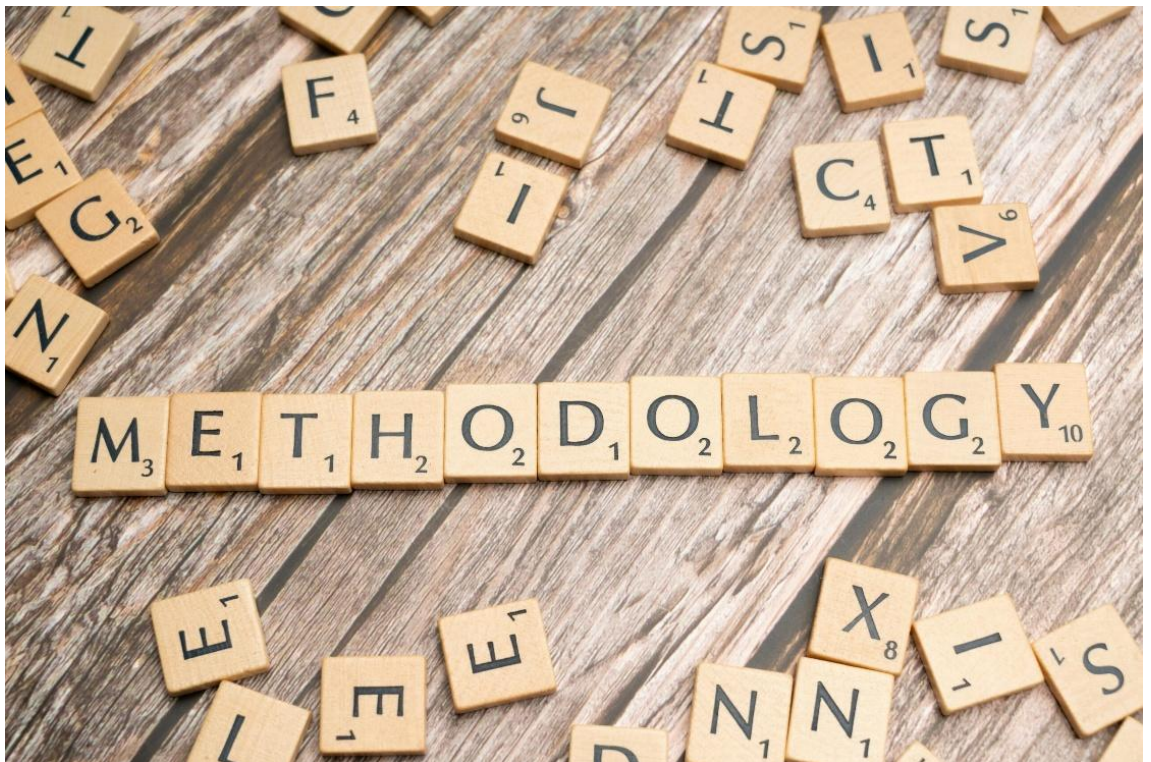


Figure 3 Methodology

5.Theoretical Background

This section provides an overview of the topic and introduces the content discussed in the following subsections.

5.1 Brief history of the game

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege is a first-person shooter(FPS) developed by Ubisoft, game has released at the end of 2015 and currently it is in its 10th year with plans for future duo to its popularity. This is a very unique shooter game due to the method in which it is designed, it is close quarter combat inside a building, main goal is to disarm a bomb or eliminate all defenders/attackers. There can be arguments made that game is similar to other well know competitive FPS which is CS2 also known as Counter Strike 2 however after examining closely these both games are so far apart. Siege has a very expanded roster of operators that increases with each year, each with different abilities with some loadouts being similar while also releasing new maps or reworking old ones another major difference is destructive environment and possibility of vertical play.

Rainbow Six Siege has officially launched its Pro League in early 2016, game did get some fluctuations in player counts and esports viewership over the years however during Covid and after it so post 2020/21 game has started to pick up again and now game is at a stage where many players have returned with more expected when R6 goes free to play over the summer. Until summer game is available for purchase it has been revealed by Ubisoft that players who have purchased game will keep all operators and have access to all game modes while players who choose to play siege when it goes F2P will have access to some operators and unranked(Tan, 2025) and (Porlock,2025) underlines the differences between premium and free to play option. One big advantage of this game model is more players means more revenue and increase in games popularity as well as player count, usually free to play game models are quite profitable, on top of that Rainbow Six is a very profitable if not the most profitable game at the current moment that Ubisoft owns. Following articles were used <https://www.oneesports.gg/gaming/rainbow-six-siege-x-release-date/>

<https://www.thegamer.com/rainbow-six-siege-free-to-play-announcement/>

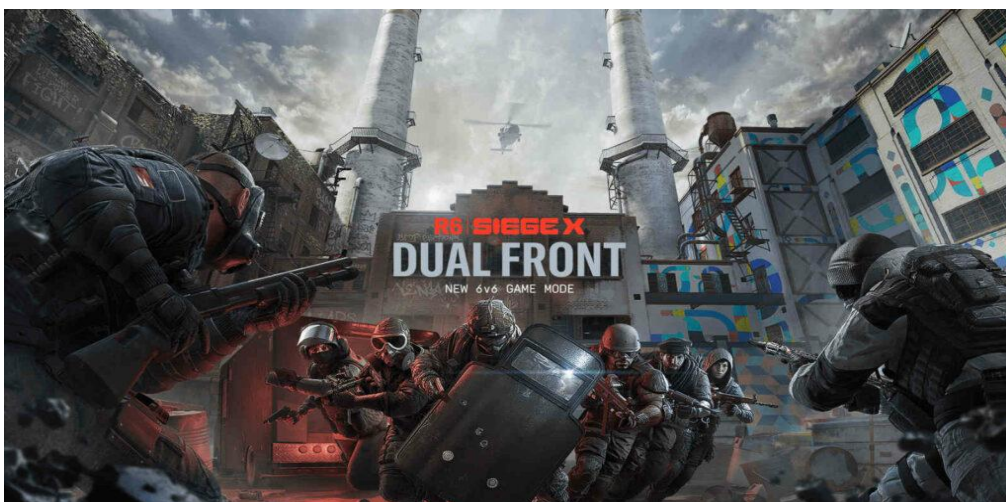


Figure 4 New game mode designed specifically for Year 10 Season 2

5.2 Features that attract players to R6

There are many types of games on the market catering to the players interests. Rainbow Six Siege is regarded as one of most popular and widely appreciated games. But the question that comes to light is why is Rainbow Six Siege so popular. (SiegeGG,2024). Article from website SiegeGG was used for this section: <https://siege.gg/news/why-is-rainbow-six-siege-so-popular>

Game is designed for 5vs5 matches, players are divided into attackers and defenders. Attackers main objective is to either eliminate all defenders, defuse the bomb and in some game modes secure area or rescue a hostage. In games most popular modes which are: Unranked and Ranked the objective is to defuse bomb or eliminate all defenders. Defenders fortify the positions, set traps and mainly counterattack, defenders main objective is to defend the bomb/designated sites or make sure attackers don't extract hostage, what is interesting is defenders don't exactly need to eliminate all attackers they can simply wait since each round has a limited time required to secure the objective. Time limit differs in Unranked and Ranked is shorter and in Quick play it is a little bit longer.

Game has many operators to choose from, each of the operators are equipped with unique weapons(in some cases weapons get recycled and added to other newcomers operators) and gadgets, variation in team composition and strategy is one of key aspects of Siege especially in Ranked and Siege Cup mode. Siege Cup is recent addition and it is the most competitive mode trying to mirror pro tournaments with bracket stages etc.

Tactical gameplay, different strategies needed, teamwork, and skill are one of core basics of Siege, skill can be based on aim or game sense. While many shooters players can get away with so to say lone wolf game style meaning no communication, picking operators which in the current set up don't offer any help will most likely result in much tougher round and likely in a loss. Siege highlights importance of planning approach to objectives, communication, and choosing correct operator based on abilities and what is needed, this makes each match dynamic and predictable as player can predict what kind of operator lineup will be selected for the objective.

5.2.1 Unique gameplay

Unique gameplay is what sets this game apart from the rest of the games in its genre. As summarised in paragraphs above game focuses on tactical gameplay, strategic planning and cohesive team coordination setting this game apart from other shooters. Game is slower-paced, more thoughtful approach which is appealing to players who want and are looking for a more strategic experience.

5.2.2 Destructive environment

Games environment is destructible to some extent, players can destroy walls, floors and ceiling adding more ways to create angles, vertical positions and simply to confuse defenders when executing a breach onto site that is being defended. Destruction does add some unpredictability to the rounds as well as complexity.

Sieges take on destruction makes gameplay more interesting and with newest updates adding destructive elements to maps such as: gas pipes which explode after few shots setting area on fire for few seconds other destructive element is fire extinguishers which create smoke cloud. From what is being revealed by developers more destructive ingredients will be added in time to game.

5.2.3 Operator diversity

After 10 years the operator roster in Siege is vast with variety of operators from different countries and military backgrounds(some are special forces some are PMCs). Each operator has unique gadget(ability) and play style offering players a range of choices and strategies. This allows players an option to not constantly select the same operator since there are many operators whose roles are similar. Choices like these with different operators are what keeps the game fresh and highly encourages experimenting with the different possible lineups.

5.2.4 Strong Esports Scene

Rainbow Six Sieges esports scenes are very popular, Sieges robust esports scene does have a huge role in the games popularity, longevity and endurance, game has been out for 10 years and Pro League is always one of main topics, it can be argued that due to some of games issues Pro Tournaments are in a sense carrying the game until issues are fixed.

Proof of strong esports scene can be seen when viewing R6s channels on twitch dedicated to esports matches, it is always shown how full the arenas are also when next two upcoming events were announced for Siege which are: Munich Major and SI Paris 2026 majority of tickets were sold out with only the most common available for very limited time. Arenas being sold out is proof that R6s esports scenes are here to stay for a long time.

A thriving esports community with regular tournaments and a dedicated followers can definitely attract new players but also attract new viewers who might just want to watch the game being played at the highest competitive level.

5.2.5 Continuous updates

In order to make sure players are engaged and stay with the game Ubisoft has consistently supported the game with new content, operators and balance changes. Making the game engaging and fun for the players is key not only to Siege and Ubisoft but to any game which revolves around multiplayer. New content simply helps game to remain fresh and exciting.

To summarise Ubisoft's Update strategy to keep the game popular is simple, ensure that each season has something exciting, it can be new map or a rework of already existing map, new operator or new weapon being added. Changing maps in terms of adding or removing from ranked or unranked playlist. Seasonal content always adds something new, this can be a new battle pass, limited time events, cosmetic items this offers player base extra incentives to keep playing the game. Ubisoft ensures game is balanced with updates which make sure games balance is intact. This helps in

creating a fair play and prevents overpowered operators and strategies. Recently Ubisoft had some issues with balance, nerfing operators or removing some part of operators kit making them useless however after communities reach and outcry to stop nerfing operators so much, Ubisoft latest patch for balancing reverted some of the nerfs buffing some defenders to make them a possible alternative in teams compositions.

<https://siege.gg/news/why-is-rainbow-six-siege-so-popular>

5.3 R6s 10 year long history with each season

Tom Clancys Rainbow Six Siege currently has been out for decade within the video game market, In December game will officially be 10 years old, to commemorate such achievement which not many online games achieve, there will be a special event to celebrate such milestone in the game. Developer blog states that certain maps and operator loadouts from the games original launch will be available for this commemoration, of course this will be a special event therefore it will be accessible throughout games menu.

Before exploring the changes each Year and season brought let's look a little bit at the beginning, game launched with 21 operators and now after its 10th year the operator count is 75, game launched with 11 maps some still available today some removed and completely reworked. As of now in 2025 there are in total 24 maps. Over these long 10 years the game did have some problems, many were solved while some still remain to these days but unfortunately that is how game design goes however comparing the game and its state in 2015 vs 2025 at the current moment and overall game is better in terms of graphics, movement etc, but the main issue is still cheaters and certain bugs, glitches and exploits they do get fixed but usually that open door to another glitch or bug.

Arguably the main turning points in the games history were: the decisions to add cross-progression meaning a person only had to buy the game and link the Ubisoft connect and his progress from PS system or Xbox would straight away carry over to the PC or from PC to Xbox. Second important changed was the addition of cross-play meaning that consoles and pcs could now play in same lobbies, consoles have 3 options(console specific pool so PS players vs PS players etc, console-cross play and cross-play with PCs). Players could also see their rank in each of the specific pools, an image will be shown to explain. Cross-play did help in terms of matchmaking, a person could get into a ranked match much faster, console cross-play also improved the time taken to find a match.



Most important change in game history took place in mid-2025 when after 10 years Ubisoft announced that with games Year 10 season 2, R6 would now be known as Tom Clancys Rainbow Six Siege X and game would be a free to play opening doors to those players who wanted to get into the game but couldn't because maybe price was high or whatever their reason was, this opened doors to many newcomers. Veteran players received rewards based on which year did they start playing the game. Ubisoft also added a new game mode called Dual Front and one aimed for newcomers. Free to play players when reaching the required level would unlock Unranked mode which also made return when Siege X launched, if a free to play player would want to play ranked and siege cup game modes they would have to buy game since these are the 2 most competitive game modes the game has.

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

CROSSPLAY AND
CROSS-PROGRESSION
DEPLOYMENT MAP

**JUNE 30
LAUNCH ON STADIA**


Crossplay and
cross-progression
available between
**PC, STADIA,
and LUNA.**

PC  

**EARLY
2022**

Crossplay available
between **Xbox** and
PlayStation®

Cross-progression
available between
ALL PLATFORMS

 **XBOX** 

The graphic features a background image of a character from Rainbow Six Siege. It is divided into three diagonal sections by black lines. The top-left section is blue and contains the game title and the main heading. The middle section is white and contains the 'JUNE 30 LAUNCH ON STADIA' announcement and details about crossplay and cross-progression between PC, Stadia, and Luna, accompanied by the PC, Steam, and Luna logos. The bottom-right section is white and contains the 'EARLY 2022' announcement and details about crossplay between Xbox and PlayStation, and cross-progression across all platforms, accompanied by the Xbox and PlayStation logos.

Figure 5 Implementation of crossplay and cross-progression

Beginning (Year 1-Year3)

Year 1 (2016-2017)

Season 1- Operation Black Ice added into games operator lineup 2 Canadian Joint Task Force operators(Buck and Frost) one is attacker one is defender, new map called Yacht was added into map pool. Bucks ability is an underbarrel shotgun, Frosts ability is to set 3 bear traps.

Season 2- Operation Dust line- 2 Navy seals operators(Blackbeard and Valkyrie)- Blackbeard is an attacker equipped with rifle mountable ballistic face shield, Valkyrie can set 3 cameras around the map. Border map released with this season.

Season 3- Operation Skull Rain – 2 BOPE operators (Capitao and Caveira), Capitao uses a crossbow that fires 2 smoke arrows and 2 incendiary arrows, Caveira has an ability called silent step which makes her footsteps quiet she also has unique mechanic of being able to interrogate attackers who have been downed by trap or gunfight. Favela map released

Season 4- Operation Red Crow – 2 Special Assault Team operators(Hibana and Echo)- Hibana is attacker equipped with explosive pellets while Echo uses a drone to disorient attackers. Skyscraper map released.

Year 2 (2017-2018)

Season 1- Operation Velvet Shell- 2 GEO operators (Jackal and Mira)- Jackal has ability to track defenders by scanning footsteps, Mira is able to deployed a 2 one-way electable bulletproof windows that can be destroyed by shooting red container bellow the glass panel. Coastline map released

Season 2- Operation Health- no new operators or maps realised, this updates goal was to fix any bug and issues from Year 1 and Year 2S1, game had some minor and major bugs following the Operation Health release

Season 3- Operation Blood Orchid- 3 operators with 2 being from Hong Kong(Special Duties Unit) and one Polish GROM, (Ying, Lesion and Ela). Ying is an attacker who throws a blinding stun grenade, Lesion deploys a poison mines which slow attackers and damage over time, Ela used a concussion mines to daze and confuse attackers who trigger it. Theme park map released

Season 4- Operation White Noise- 3 operators- 2 being Korean 707th Special Mission Battalion and last one being a GROM operative. (Zofia, Dokkaebi and Vigil)- Zofia has a launcher that can destroy barricades or concuss defenders, launcher has 2 breaching rounds and 2 concussion rounds, Dokkaebi can call defenders giving away their position while Vigil can mask himself from being detected by attackers observation tools, tower map released.

Year 3(2019-2019)

Season 1- Operation Chimera- 2 operators both attackers(Lion-GIGN and Finka-Spetsnaz)- Lion has a drone that emits pulse that can detect defenders movement, Finka can temporarily boost hp of the attackers, allowing to revive downed attackers from range, boost also helps in gun fights in terms of hp and gun recoil. No new map released

Season 2- Operation Para Bellum- 2 Italian Operators(Maestro and Alibi), in this case it was same as season 1 in terms of which operators developers choose to release, this time it was 2 defenders, Maestro deploys a bulletproof cameras that shoots beam of energy which can damage attackers, destroy attacker gadgets and acts as extra observation tool which an explosive is needed to remove it from the defenders observation gadgets. Alibi throws 3 hologram devices which reveal attackers position when shot or driven over by a drone. Villa map released.

Season 3- Operation Grim Sky- Back to default 1 attacker and 1 defender releases(Maverik and Clash), Delta Force operator and Metropolitan Police Service, Maveric uses a blowtorch to burn through metal reinforcement while Clash is a defender with a shield that shocks attackers dealing damage(will be reworked in future). Hereford base and in this case it's a rework of old map

Season 4- Operation Wind Bastion- 2 Moroccan GIGR operators(Nomad and Kaid). Nomad places an airjab which is mine that when triggered it launches a defender making noise. Kaid deploys an electric claw which can be used to electrify hatches and walls that have been reinforced. New map called Fortress added.

Middle/some popularity within games industry (Year 4-Year7)

Year 4 (2019-2020)

Season 1- Operation Burnt Horizon- 2 Australian SAS Regiment operator(Gridlock and Mozzie)- Gridlock deploys a road spike like stinger mats that cover an area and deal damage to defenders, Mozzie launches a robot called pest which hacks attacker's drone adding to defender's observation tool utility that can be deployed in round. Outback map released

Season 2- Operation Phantom Sight- 1 Norwegian Jager Corps operator and 1 US Secret Service operator (Nokk and Warden)- Nokk has a device that allows herself to be invisible to defender observation tools and slightly muffle her footsteps, Warden makes use of smart glasses which when activated can see through smoke and which make the operator invulnerable to flashbangs. Kafe Dostoyevsky map reworked

Season 3- Operation Ember Rise- 2 Latin operators (Amaru from Peru and Goyo from Mexico, Amaru is unaffiliated however she is an attacker that can deploy Garra Hook and grapple into a window, ledge or a hatch, Goyo is a defender affiliated with FES who deploys a canisters with incendiary bombs which set fire to area for 20seconds and deal damage to anyone who enters the hazard zone. Kanal map rework

Season 4- Operation Shifting Tides- 2 PMC operators (Kali from India and Wamai from Kenya) Kali uses a marksman rifle with under barrel-explosive lance which can destroy defender's gadgets within a radius of explosion, Wamai deploys devices over time which captures a projectile(grenade, flashbang etc). Theme Park map rework

Year 5 (2020-2021)

Season 1- Operation Void Edge- 2 Operators (Iana from Netherlands and Oryx from Jordan) Iana can deploy a Gemini hologram which can be controlled by a player and used as a method of droning/scouting for potential traps or defenders. Oryx can dash through soft walls and knock shield attackers on the back allowing for easier opening to eliminate shield operator. Oregon map rework

Season 2- Operation Steel Wave- 2 Operators(Ace from Norwegian FSK and Melusi unaffiliated) Ace can deploy a Selma breach charge which allows for attackers to breach soft or reinforced wall. Melusi makes use of sonic device which creates noise when defender steps in the activation area it also slightly dazes the attackers. House map rework

Season 3- Operation Shadow Legacy- At this point in the game one operator would be released per season, later it will change further. Zero is an attacker also known as Sam Fisher from Ubisoft's other well know game Splinter Cell. Zero has an ability to place a camera that can pierce through soft or hard wall and shoot a single laser shot capable of destroying defender gadgets. Tachanka who is a defender got a rework, instead mounting a machine gun he would now use a grenade launcher which fires incendiary projectiles. Chalet map rework

Season 4-Operation Neon Dawn- Royal Thai Police defender. Aruni can place three laser gates which can destroy attackers utility and also damage attackers, barrier/gate will have to be redeployed by shooting designated area. Skyscraper map rework

Year 6(2021-2022)

Season 1- Operation Crimson Heist- One attacker(Flores), Flores deploys a drones that can explode clearing any defender utility, drone can explode manually or after a timer has expired it will automatically explode. Border map rework. No operator rework

Season 2- Operation Nort Star- One defender (Thudnerbird), Thunderbird can deploy 3 healing stations which can heal attackers or defenders, this healing mechanic is to change. Healing Stations can also revive downed operators but player has to manually activate it. Favela map rework. No operator rework.

Season 3- Operation Crystal Guard- One attacker (Osa), Osa deploys a clear bulletproof shield that can be placed on windows and doorways, with this season there were three maps that got a rework: Bank, Clubhouse and Coastline. No operator rework

Season 4- Operation High Calibre- One defender (Thorn) from Irelands Garda Emergency Response Unit, Thorn deploys a proximity trap which when activated by attacker releases razors/ shrapnel, it can be placed on windows, by doorways and any other way a player wants. Outback map rework. No operator rework.

Year 7 (2022-2023)

Season 1- Operation Demon Veil- One defender(Azami) from Japan's Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, Azami uses a kunai knife to deploy a concrete bulletproof barricade that can only be destroyed by explosives, melee or hammer which attacker named Sledge uses, developers have changed this that now barrier can be destroyed by firing at it but it will take some time based on weapon type fired at the barrier. Emerald Plains map released. No operator rework

Season 2- Operation Vector Glare- Belgian attacker(Sens) from Special Forces Group, Sens deploys a disc shaped device that rolls and crates a light screen that obstructs vision but doesn't block any damage. Map released for limited event called Close Quarter. No operator rework.

Season 3- Operation Brutal Swarm- One attacker(Grim) from Singapore Naval Diving Unit, Grim uses a grenade launcher to release a nanobot swarm which ping and follows defenders caught in the radius, canisters that release can be stuck to surface or launched like a grenade and then nanobots are deployed. New map Stadium Bravo released. No operator rework

Season 4- Operation Solar Raid- One defender(Solis) from Colombian AFEAU, Solis has an access to a gadget that when turned on allows to sense any electronic gadgets attackers have deployed, these gadgets can be claymores, breach charges basically any electronic item attackers bring. Cluster scan mode can be activated which will ping all of the devices for the teammates. Currently the gadget has got a rework making it not as powerful tool as it was when Operation Solar Raid launched. New map Nighthaven Labs released. No operator rework

Rebirth/Renaissance of R6 Siege(Year 8-Year10)

Year 8(2023-2024)

Season 1- Operation Commanding Force- One Brazilian(Brava) attacker from COT unit. Brava deploys a Kludge drone which hacks defender utilities, it can be cameras, traps, way in which this operator is to be utilized is to hack traps or cameras and turn them against defenders and also hack a utility which causes it to overload and break. No map rework. No operator rework.

Season 2- Operation Dread Factor- One Swedish defender(Fenrir) from Special Operation Group. Fenrir places a Dread Mine which obstructs attackers vision with purple haze, he has 5 mines in his inventory with 3 mines that can be activated at the same time, in the games current state Fenrir still has access to 5 mines however only 2 mines can be activated at a time but not when one is destroyed a random mine that has been placed on map will activate. Consulate map rework. No operator rework.

Season 3- Operation Heavy Mettle- one Korean (Ram) attacker form Republic of Korea Army Special Warfare Command. Ram has access to 3 BUGI mini tank drone which is bullet proof, she can choose for drone to go in 3 different directions visible by line which the drone will follow, drone destroys any soft floor or wall in its path. Drone itself can be destroyed by explosives and by shooting on the back red canister which self-destructs the device. No map rework. No operator rework

Season 4- Operation Deep Freeze- One Portuguese (Tubarao) defender from Special Actions Detachment. Tubarao makes use of Zoto Canister which upon impacting surface freezes it temporarily, canister will also slow any operators caught in radius, when it is thrown on ceiling there are visible footprints of attackers allowing defenders to better prepare themselves for attack on the site. Gadgets main use is to slow/freeze attackers when breaching a reinforced wall. Lair map released. No operator rework

Year 9(2024-2025)

Season 1- Operation Deadly Omen- One attacker(Deimos) from ATF. Deimos used a death mark ability which when used targets a scouted defender, when ability is triggered a small drone will ping location of defender while also live pinging the said defender every few seconds, while ability is used the hunted defender will also see position where Deimos is, when using deathmark only secondary weapon can be used which in this case is powerful .44 Vendetta revolver with custom sight designed especially for Deimos and aggressive play style intended. No map rework. No operator rework.

Season 2- Operation New Blood- This season did not add any new operators, a recruit operator got a rework one aimed at attacking side(Striker) one at defending(Sentry). Striker has access to any gadget that attackers can have meaning from choice of, grenade, flashbang, smoke grenade, impact emp grenade, breach charge, claymore and hard breach charge, she can choose 2 of these presented utilities. Sentry is virtually the same he can choose 2 of the following defender gadgets: impact grenade, C4, razor wire, proximity mine, observation blocker and a bulletproof camera. No map rework. Recruit rework.

Season 3- Operation Twin Shells- One Greek(Skopos) defender. Skopos uses 2 humanoid robots which, Skopos can switch between the shells/bodies. Unused body crouches down turning into a visible bulletproof shield for protection of the shell while also acting as a camera. This idea of operator is new since player controls a robots instead of a human operator however there is explanation to it, Skopos she has been injured by Deimos, Skopos is also know by some players who followed the franchise because she has appeared in older Rainbow games. No map rework, no operator rework

Season 4- Operation Collision Point- No operator added due to existing operator Blackbeard receiving a rework. Blackbeard now uses full body shield instead of mountable face shields and to use his main gun shield has to be lowered, he can also full sprint with shield and knock back defenders. No map reworks. Blackbeard rework

Year 10(2025-2026)

Season 1- Operation Prep Phase- One attacker(Raurora) from New Zeland SAS, Raurora can deploy a bulletproof doors/panels that can be only opened when shooting a designated spot when close to the panel. Rauroras doors can be destroyed by explosives, this ability allows for ways to cut off roaming defenders from returning to site and it crates a safe pocket in a way for attackers to bunker down and plan next move. No new map. No operator rework

Season 2- Operation Daybreak – Existing defender Clash received a rework and this season welcomed the new era of Siege know today as Siege X and games graphical upgrades to modernize the game itself. Rework allowed clash to place shield down and turn the shock ability shield has on and off but now it slows down attackers without dealing damage. Placed shield can be easily destroyed by melee or explosives. Due to Siege X launching for free there was a new mode called Dual Front with map District released. Some maps received the Siege X graphical update but Siege classified it as a rework in a way, 5 maps that got the modernization were: Bank, Border, Chalet, Clubhouse and Kafe Dostoyevsky. Rest of maps will be getting the graphical updates in following season

Season 3- Operation High Stakes- New defender(Denari) from Switzerlands , Denari has a 7 laser trip vires which will destroy defender utility, damage attacker and also make a sound when attacker trips the wire. Maps which received small rework are: Nighthaven Labs, Lair and Consulate. No operator reworks.

Season 4- Currently it is not known what season will becalled. Attacker reworked confirmed which is to do with Thatcher and hard breaching. Map will be reworked high probability of Fortress map receiving rework. 2 maps getting modernized.



Figure 6 Year 10 planned content

Summary

As presented in the 3 chapters of Rainbow Six Sieges 10 year history the developer has continued on giving the player new content. It was best to divide the 10 year so far span in 3 distinctive parts and now its time to fully summarize those important chapters.



Figure 7 Detailed image showing changes in most of the seasons

Unfortunately the figure above does not show changes leading to year 10 season 3. One piece of information that has not been updated or changed due to when one of the changes was made is to the Sieges Barlett University map which has been completely removed and was playable in situations however these have also been removed from the game completely in favour of training grounds same with T-hunt(Terrorist hunt) this was practice mode vs Ai before new training ground mode was implemented. T-hunt mode was quite popular within the player base as it allowed players to warm up before starting quick match, ranked or unranked games. Many players keep asking Ubisoft to bring this mode back.

5.4 Changes that shaped the game

Throughout the years the game has undertaken many changes to make the game better and attract new and veteran players. Most of the times changes were met with mixed reactions, some seasons were poor while some were extremely good. Many of these issues did create negative opinion players have on the game but there have been times where season launch went smooth with few issues or simply a certain old bugs or glitches fixed. It would be beneficial to fully examine the changes because they are what makes the game thrive

Since December 2015 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege has shifted from quite small tactical FPS to a 10 year long live service and esports platform. There were many structural and technical changes that shaped games design, community and its esports landscape the most important will be stated below.

1. Traditional Release to currently ongoing seasonal operations also known as live-service.

Initially Ubisoft's plans were to utilize the usual well known post-release patch however the developers choose to use a seasonal operations model that with each season would bring new free content on a regular intervals. This changed was significant due to the need for balancing long term design goals with player expectations while new content would bring a new change and reset how games is played and change meta this option is better than expansions. This change improved games quality of life. (Ubisoft)

2. Competitive framework and esports.

Started quite early few months after game was released, Rainbow Six Pro League was established in 2016. Pro League shaped the game as an esports title while at the same time greatly influencing the design priorities which include operator variety, round structure, map balancing and pick/ban mechanics. Esports potential pushed the developers to ensure rules are standardized, game is spectator friendly, games competitive setting pressured the dev team to address as fast as possible exploits which usually take much longer to fix in single player titles or casual multiplayer games. Over these years competitive side evolved with inclusion of Siege Cup which is a tournament like mode available to players who seek challenge with squad, initial creation of Pro League propelled the game into a competitive, tactical shooter. (Ubisoft,2016).

3. Anti-cheat and player protection

Many players have mixed opinions on this, this can be seen always on Instagram posts from games official account, reddit and other medias but cheating is one of the game's biggest issues that disrupts the competitive play. Game did integrate BattleEye anticheat in 2016, 2-step verification is also utilised to make player accounts safer. All of the security measure taken are to ensure that community trust and platform accessibility. Recently new anticheat program has been developed called R6 Shield Guard. The anti-cheat program has consistently been presented as core to maintaining Sieges competitive promise. (Ubisoft Dev Blog, 2020).

4. Map and operator reworks, pick/ban and meta shifts

The biggest changes in gameplay if it comes to Siege do not usually come from nerfs or buffs, what shifts the gameplay is map reworks, changes in attachments, operator reworks and last introduction of new operators which change potential line ups in attacker side and defender side. All of these ingredients change fundamentally how rounds play out, map design, destructibility and objective placement were examined and reworked or rebalanced to promote a more tactical gameplay and attacker/defender picks that would complement team, introduction of pick and ban phase changed drastically how each game is played focusing on development of new strategies. These systemic yet important changes created new metas and made balance a cross season design challenge rather than isolated patch update. (Lahti, 2018, Ubisoft, 2018-2025 patch notes).

5. Technical overhauls and Siege X evolution

Year 2025 marked a milestone in games history, game celebrated 10 years and with this rare milestone Ubisoft released a major evolution also known as renaissance or rebirth, Siege X has been released and with this release game shifted into new age, instead pay to play (P2P) developer opted to go for free to play(F2P) model. Changing into free to play model was a surprising move, other important changes included a modernized maps and visual so in short a graphical upgrades to the game. New pick and ban system has been implemented. A 6v6 mode called Dual Front also released, audio was improved. Free to play allowed players a much easier access to the game without need to buy game to play while if players want to play ranked and siege cup which are most competitive modes then players would have to pay. Esports tab was also integrated allowing for player to follow games closely by simply switching a tab in games main menu. Siege X shows how technical, business model and design decisions can be combined into a single pivot that reshapes the community and competitive structures at the same time. (Kotaku, 2025).

Last two changes that are also important and assisted in changes are: monetization and Operation Health which aimed to fix some old glitches and bugs and overall fix game but this was implemented in 2017. Monetization is a later chapter in this dissertation and will be examine in detail.

Operation Health is often viewed as a turning point in the games early stage same as release of Siege X is viewed as turning point to modernize the game. In the Operation Health it was decided that that particular season will not have new operator available but its goal was to focus on technical aspects to improve things like servers, matchmaking and patch releases. Decision acknowledged the long term requirement for growth of infrastructure and reliable online performance. (Ubisoft, 2017).

To conclude this part the path of Rainbow Six Siege proves that present-day multiplayer shooters are not exactly shaped by occasional patches but by an integral changes focused on live-service which resets metas. Esports infrastructure demands spectators and competitive clarity, anti-cheat development is crucial to ensure fair play. Constant updates in terms of new operators, map reworks etc add to games health and keep players interested in checking out new seasons.

5.5 Pro League

From the game's early introduction in late 2015 as a tactical team-oriented first-person shooter utilizing destructive elements and gameplay based on operators with unique gadgets, Ubisoft saw a potential for Sieges place within esports tournaments. Pro League came into fruition after Ubisoft and a tournament partner ESL joined in a collaboration with simple task in mind, the main goal of Pro League is to show top teams on an international stage. This started as a backbone for the title and it cultivated into the biggest event in R6 Pro League calendar which is known as Six Invitational. (Ubisoft, 2018).



Figure 8 Official logo for Rainbow Six Siege Pro League

The Origins can be traced back to mid-2010s when The Pro League was announced as a professional circuit with already structured competitive calendar with seasonal play and finals. Previously

mentioned ESL(Electronic Sports League) worked with Ubisoft to produce and operate Pro League events for several seasons, on May 19th 2020 ESL announced to take smaller role focusing more on APAC region and officially said goodbye to Pro League as we know it. Recently another company started to assist it is called BLAST(2023-ongoing). Major regions that participate in the Pro League are: Europe, North America, Latin America, APAC-Asian Pacific and Brazil, these regions compete in their regional qualifiers and based on the results of the qualifiers the top few teams are sent to global finals.(Ubisoft,2018).

Initially the structure and design mirrored traditional sports leagues(multi season years, promotion and if teams don't perform relegation) with the main stage being the global championship (Six Invitational) where top teams from each region faced off against each other. Important note is that relegation did not apply to all regions this was only applied to some. After few events Ubisoft decided to align the Pro League (match lengths, map pools, season lengths) to closely match with game updates, DLC schedules, and viewer engagement patterns. (Ubisoft, 2018).



Figure 9 Siege Invitational Logo

Best of three format had been used for playoffs and high stakes matches, within the group stages this varied between best of one and best of three depending on season and region and teams performance. Maps and operator picks greatly influenced team strategies and tactical decisions,

league often used map bans, pick/bans mechanics and season length based on game patches and competitive balance. Changes announced over time included six month seasons split by a midseason break and the adoption of different round counts and scheduling to align with content updates. (Ubisoft,2018).

A turning point in Sieges esports history has been announced at the Six Invitational 2020, when it was revealed that Ubisoft decided to significantly change and restructure its esports ecosystem. It has been stated that after Pro League Season 11(XI) there would be a transition from a centralized League to a regional structure and a point based system would be implemented to better support local competition, create much clearer ways to qualify and to provide a localized content for fans. (Ubisoft,2020). This announcement marked an end of the Pro League in its then current format and shifted favouring regional circuits, Majors and more continuous season structure.

Reason for restructuring was in response to the logistical and financial strain of maintaining a single global Pro League, the need to adapt by increasing regional following and an esports market which shifted/evolved towards publisher driven league ecosystem(franchising or regional league), this was becoming a norm. Casters and analysts commented that such shift in 2020 was seen as evolution to create point based, stage/major model similarly to other major esports which in turn better integrated local leagues and international events. (Gupta, 2024).

Pro league served as main regional competition while the Siege Invitational(SI) was the premier global event in Sieges calendar where top teams from each region competed in high stakes tournament after qualifying from Pro league and other qualifiers. SI is an annual world championship and over the past few years it grew in scale in terms of prize pool and team participation.(Liquipedia). Currently the Six Invitational retained its role as the season-finale global championship, fed by regional circuits and a points system.

An important distinctive of Siege esports is the close connection between live game and competitive play. Due to game being updated on regular basis with new operators, reworks and map or gadget changes the Pro League and its replacement structures needed to adjust season timing with in-game updates. Season timing has been redesign to reduce meta disruption and allow teams to adapt to any new changes. (Ubisoft, 2018). Based on this the tournaments often provided a sporting competition as well as a testing grounds for analysing patch impact, pick/ban options and the different metas based on regions.



Figure 10 Logo change form Pro league to R6 esports

Pro League broadcasts have greatly evolved in production value, commentary, and additional programming (analyst desk, VODs, highlight packages). Audience growth has been spotted in all regions but most noticeable in the big three (Brazil, Europe and North America), within these particular regions viewership spikes correlated with top teams and local stars, other regions are slowly catching up. Investing in prize pools and partnering with streaming platforms helped Ubisoft to professionalize the scene. Main challenge being monetization and sustainable business model remained an industry-wide challenge especially when it comes to a tactical shooter that viewers understand the core basics of the game compared with some other spectator friendly titles on the market. In 2020 it was reported and suggested that creation of localized content could improve sponsorship opportunities and regional broadcast deals.

To conclude this section the Pro League era impacted greatly in ensuring that Rainbow Six Siege esports becomes more professionalised, it had set a high competitive requirements, mature broadcast production and planted the ecosystem from which regional circuits now prosper. 2020 restructuring acknowledged both the successes and limits of the Pro League model and restructured to a model used currently. Examining the lifecycle of R6 Pro League allows for a deeper insight into how the publishers manage the game design, regional markets affect and interact to shape the next stages if an esports.

To add last thing for this section a timeline of the changes will be shown to show and visualize these changes

Regions and Format changes (Rainbow Six Siege Pro League)

Regions (historic – modern)

- **Early Pro League era (2016-2019):** Organized around major regions of *Europe(EU)*, *North America(NA)*, *Latin America(LATM)* and *Asia-Pacific(APAC)*, APAC was usually split into subregions(APAC North/ APAC South or country subdivisions: Japan, Korea, SEA, Oceania). These four major drove the Pro League seasons and finals qualification.
- **Brazil as distinct competitive regions:** Brazil maintained its own distinctive competitive ecosystem, in many cases tournament organisers treated Brazil/ South America as its own circuit(South America/Brazil league) depending on calendar and format
- **Post 2020 regional model(evolution):** After Season XI announcements Ubisoft choose to establish a named regional leagues that replaced the old global Pro League finals model, meaning regions would now be named as follows: *North American League*, *European league*, *Latin American League*, and multiple APAC divisions (APAC North/ APAC South/ APAC Oceania/ Japan/ Korea but this depended on the year and organizers. This model directly fed into Majors and the Six Invitation by use of a points/ qualification systems.
- **Later(2024-2025)- expansion to more granular regions:** Ubisoft and partners announced a reorganization of competitive league with formal introduction of nine regions in the new competitive format- Europe, MENA, North America, South America, APAC subdivisions, Japan, Korea etc. These nine region recognition was in collaboration with BLAST for broadcasting and operating. This proves a strategic move towards more regionally tailored competition and broadcast ecosystems.



Figure 11 2024/2025 regionalisation into multiple leagues



Figure 12 2021 North American League announcement



Figure 13 Example of a regular season schedule 2021 European League



Figure 14 Global season 2023 showing stages, off-seasons, Majors/ Invitational qualifiers

5.6 Rainbow Six Esports

In this chapter there will be a some more details about Rainbow Six Esports scene

The early Years and Beginning of Competitive Siege

- ❖ Founding of Pro League(2016): Siege first official Pro League tournament took place on March 4th 2016 during Intel Extreme Masters(IEM). First ever champions crowned at the event were PENTA Sports(EU) defeating GiFu in the final.
- ❖ Why Siege is perfect as an esports: games unique mechanics, operator based play, destructible surrounding, tactical gameplay showed a great depth, stargegy and very strong basis for a team based competition.(Siege GG, 2025)
- ❖ An esports audiences grew and production value increased, Siege began to attract a dedicated global fanbase.

Competitive Ecosystem

Six Invitational (SI)- Tournament held once a year to crown a champion

- The Six Invitational is the most important event in the R6 calendar, it is organised every year by Ubisoft, earlier tournaments had fewer teams however by 2018-2020 it was expanded to 16 teams and later up to 20.
- The most popular and game record braking SI 2024 which took place in Sao Paulo hosted 20 teams with prize pool of US\$ 3000000 and viewership sky rocketed to over 500 thousand. (figure 7 for reference)

Majors and Other Global/International Tournaments

- Majors are also a crucial part of R6 esports, Majors are a large scale LAN events where top teams form regional leagues compete for place at SI.
- A surprising news came to light when at an Esport World Cup (EWC) held in Saudi Arabia it was announced that Rainbow Six Siege would be one of the titles included, EWC was announced in 2023 and it already had 2 events one in 2024 and one in 2025, it is to be held annually every summer season around July/August.

Scale and Activity

- Based on 2023 report Siege hosted around 40 official tournaments in that year with 411 games played, 527 maps contested and 5792 rounds across pro level competition
- High activity proves that game has well established esports ecosystem.

Importance for esports and competitive gaming

- 1) **Published driven esports maturation:** Ubisoft's continuous active role in construction of league formats, events and competitive integrity shows how a publisher and their actions can sustain a competitive landscape over many years.
- 2) **Adaptability and evolution:** In less than a decade game competitive structure evolved quite rapidly it went from Pro Leagues to a modern global circuit showing willingness to adapt and change based on growth, community requirements and global markets.
- 3) **Longevity though balance and updates:** Games design allows to keep things relevant and strategic which is essential for long-term esports sustainability.
- 4) **Community and data culture:** Siege GG a third party goes to a great lengths to archive the games esports history because a great value by esports communities is placed on data, legacy and accessible historical memory

Throughout these ten years Siege has undergone many changes, from a game with promising emphasis on team play and tactics to a well know global esports title with prosperous calendar, frequent LAN events and a dedicated international community. The necessary transition carried out by developer underlined how Ubisoft's commitment , structural flexibility and community driven feedback and data infrastructure all combine to support a modern esport title over many years.

5.7 Monetization and games sales and Financial Performance

Understanding the financial aspect of Rainbow Six Siege is essential in the deciding factor in sustainability let it be as a game or an esports. The games decade long success not only needs to rely on active players and esports viewership but on the monetization strategies. Monetization strategies that Ubisoft employs are microtransactions, battle passes, DLCs, initial copies sold, re-sales and back catalogue, all of these support Ubisoft's business model. In this part there will be a review on data available on sales, player counts, monetization mechanics and financial reports that reflect Sieges contribution to Ubisoft's profits.

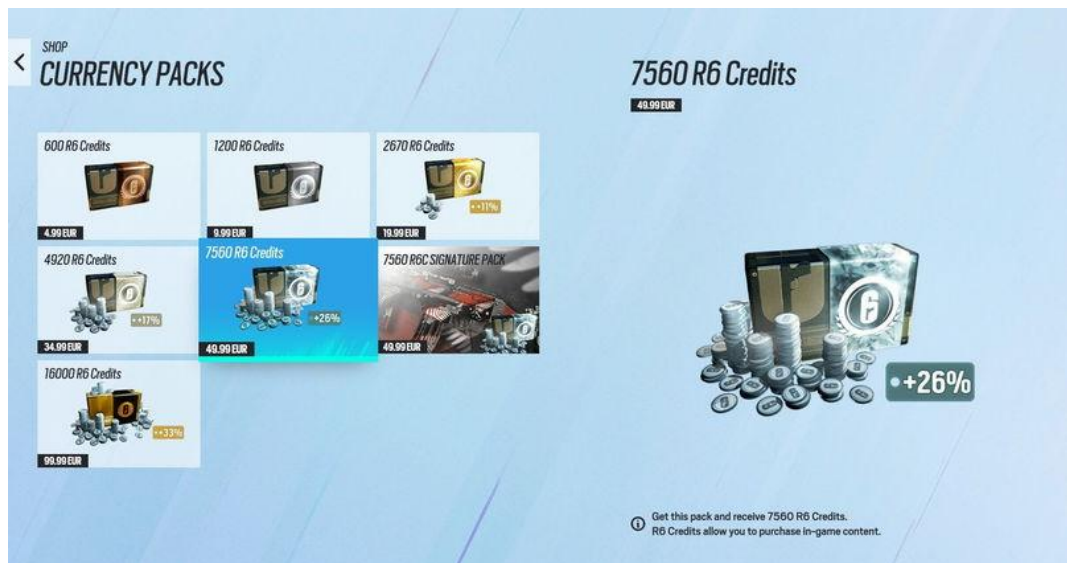


Figure 15 Currency packs players can buy

Shown above is an image of currency packs available to purchase at different prices, higher the price the bigger amount of in game premium currency a person will receive on their account. As shown some packs offer extra R6 credits that person receives upon purchase of the selected currency pack.

600 r6 credits- €4.99

1200 r6 credits- €9.99

2670 r6 credits- €19.99

4920 r6 credits- €34.99

7560 r6 credits- €49.99

16000 r6 credits- €99.99

Important Financial figures and Sales

- In September 2022, it was reported by Ubisoft that Rainbow Six Siege has reached 85 million unique registered players across all platforms.
- It has been announced that on September 2024 Siege reported that revenue surpassed €3.5 billion, becoming one of Ubisoft's top-earning franchises with Assassins Creed still on top in terms of cumulative spending. (WN Hub, 2024)
- This places Siege among six well know Ubisoft franchises whose lifetime gross revenue exceeded €1 billion.

Even without detailed specifics by items sold(skins, battle passes and DLC) the data that is publicly available does confirm Sieges financial footprint.

Monetization model:

- **Microtransactions(MTX):** Cosmetic items(skins, operator bundles), battle passes, seasonal bundles.
- **Battle passes/ seasonal content:** Regular seasons with new content attracting player to make recurring purchases.
- **R6 Share revenue program:** Portion of microtransaction revenue with competitive teams/organizations. Based on a report for every set of League MTX sold, 30% of the net revenue is split among the R6 Share organisations(Tier 1,2,3) and a performance pool, it is same with team branded items they share 30% of net revenue with the represented organizations. (Steiner, 2020).

This monetization strategy allows to monetize the player base by sale of skins and battle passes and the competitive esports scene by tying sales to teams and events thus effectively aligning commercial and esports incentives.

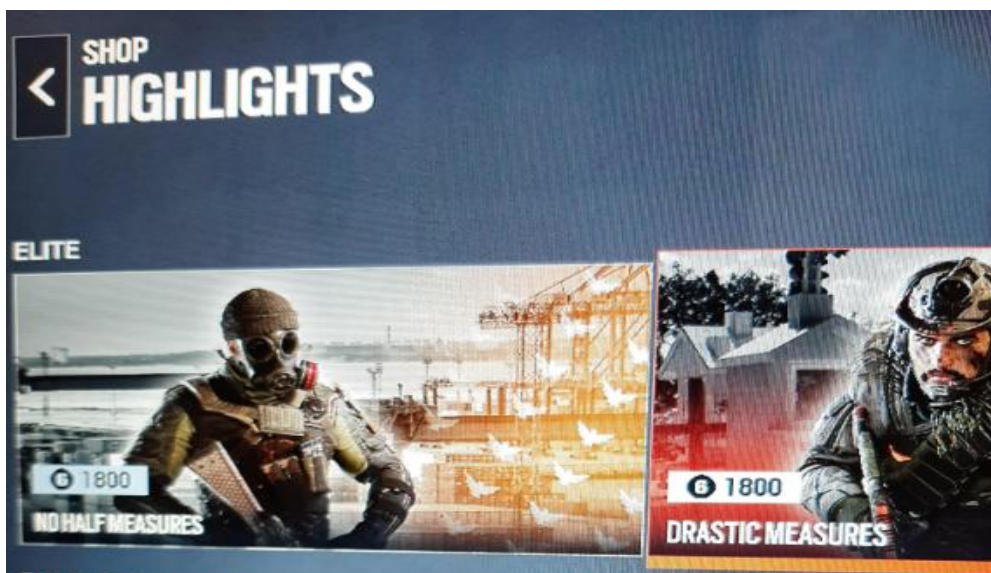


Figure 16 Highlights form the shop

Figure 25 shows 2 newest elite skins for operators and price can be seen 1800 r6 credits, based on persons current amount of R6 credits the €10 or €20 bundle will allow a purchase of the elite skin.

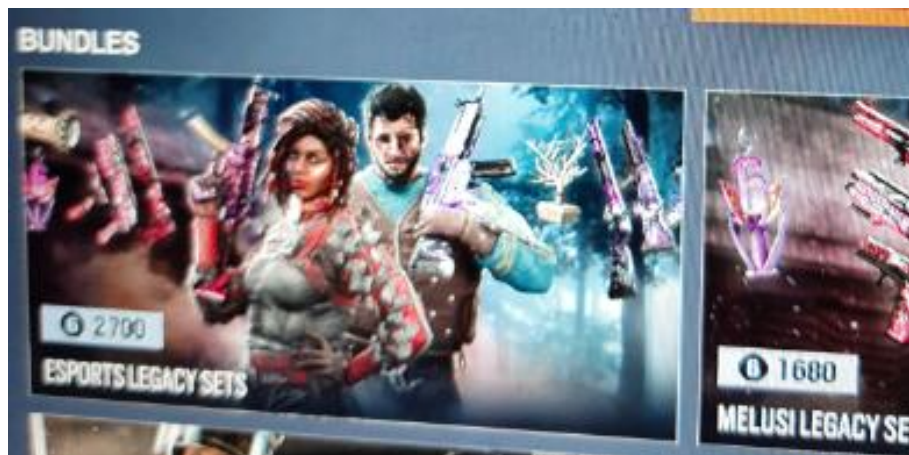


Figure 17 New Esports bundles called Legacy sets

Legacy Sets commemorate previous Majors and are more of a specialised skin sets aimed at those who closely follow Rainbow Six Esports scene. Since these are commemorative sets they are bit more pricier than normal skin set and can be bought in bundles, for example a person can obtain Esports Legacy Sets for 2700 credits or 1680 credits Legacy set titled to one of the operators shown on the picture



Figure 18 Premium Skin Ghost in the Shell

Ubisoft quite often makes a collaborations with other well know games or medias. This particular image above shows recent re-release for a collaboration of Ghost in the Shell anime with operator appearance, weapon skin, charm and in some cases a MVP(Most Valued Player) animation. Ubisoft quite often collaborates with other medias in the past Ubisoft released skins for operators from following franchises: Resident Evil, Street fighter, Yakuza, Halo, Rick and Morty tv show, The Boys tv show, Tomb Raider, Nier Automata, WWE and more. Since these are collaboration skins they usually cost more based on franchise they are taken from. It is however quite rare for Ubisoft to re-release collaboration skins.



Figure 19 Membership

Since before Siege became a free to play game Ubisoft has chosen to utilise membership which gives access to a unique skin, card background, weapon skins which are monthly items and access to premium battle pass without needing to purchase credits in order to obtain it. Person can also get 10 battle pass levels, 1 bravo pack per month. Bravo packs are essentially a packs which contain cosmetics and are only obtained by completing battle pass stages. There are few membership options there is 1-month membership and 12-month membership. 1 month membership costs €9.99 while 12 month costs €79.99.

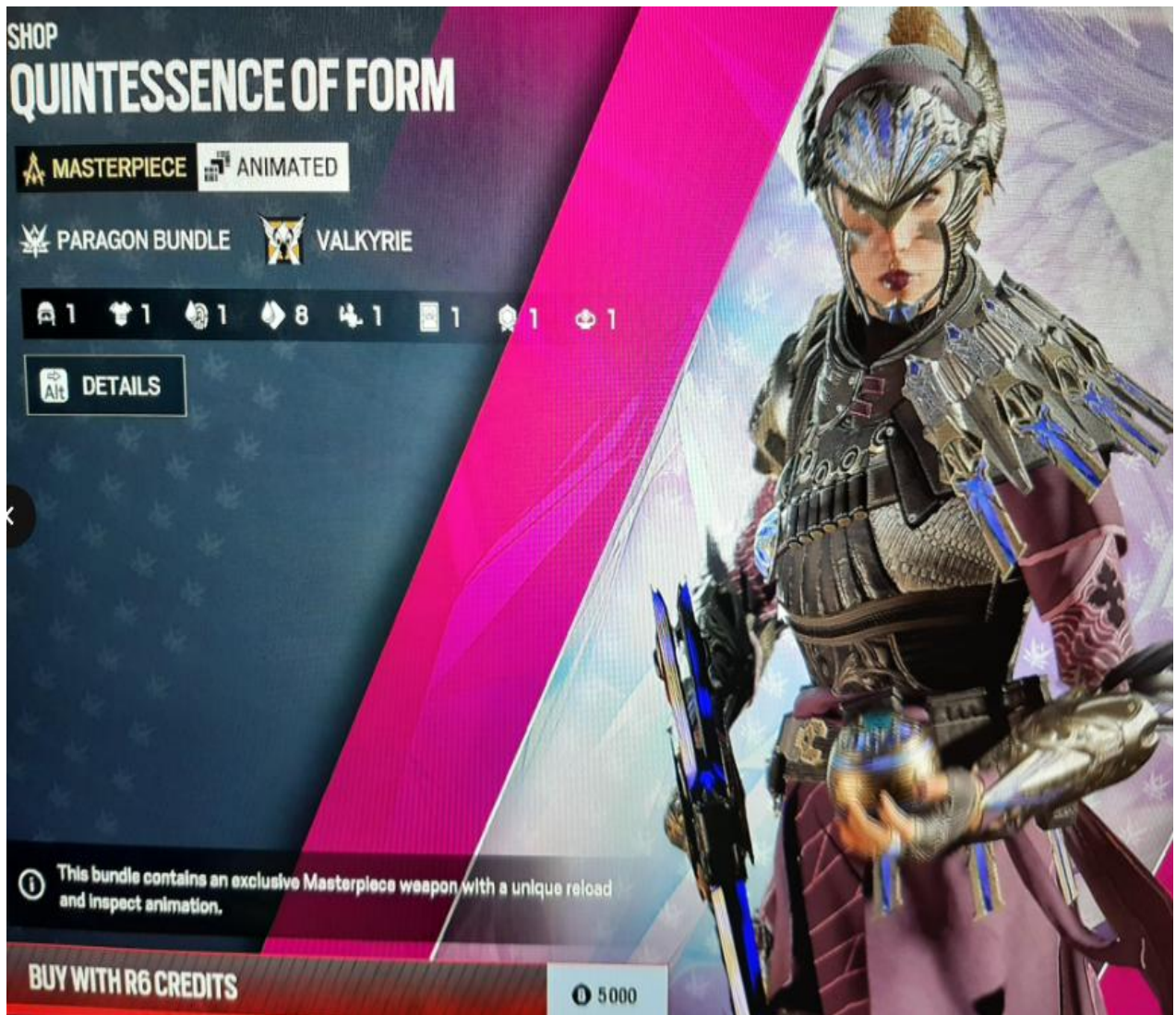


Figure 20 Paragon elite skin

As of this year Ubisoft has released one Paragon elite skin, it has been confirmed that every year one of such skins will be released. These are expensive cosmetics aimed at those players who seek to distinguish themselves. This particular skin does have a specialised animation for weapon.

Quick explanation about different Tiers if it comes to R6 Share organisations.

Tier 1- A full bundle which includes: uniform, headgear, a weapon skin, and a charms. This is the most expensive cosmetic package. Originally 30% of net revenue from team branded items sold via tier 1 went to organization however after restructuring of the program in 2022 from there onwards 50% of the proceedings would go to the organizations.

Tier 2- A more limited bundle containing a weapon skin and a charm or operator background card. These do not receive uniforms or headgear from the bundle. These team branded items share same revenue as Tier 1 items 50%. There is also possibility of teams applying for R6 Share Esport Sets but those grant less revenue share about 20%

Tier 3- The minimal bundle only a weapon skin, no charm, no uniform, no headgear. Before 2022 revenue was similar to other tiers 30%. After restructuring in 2022 Tier 3 is merged with Tier 2 for many practical purposes, basically revenue shares for team items become similar to Tier 2 50%. For Esports Sets and revenue-shared MTX, tier 3 orgs are part of the broader pool, however their share is lower in comparison to Tier 1 since this depends on tier and ranking.

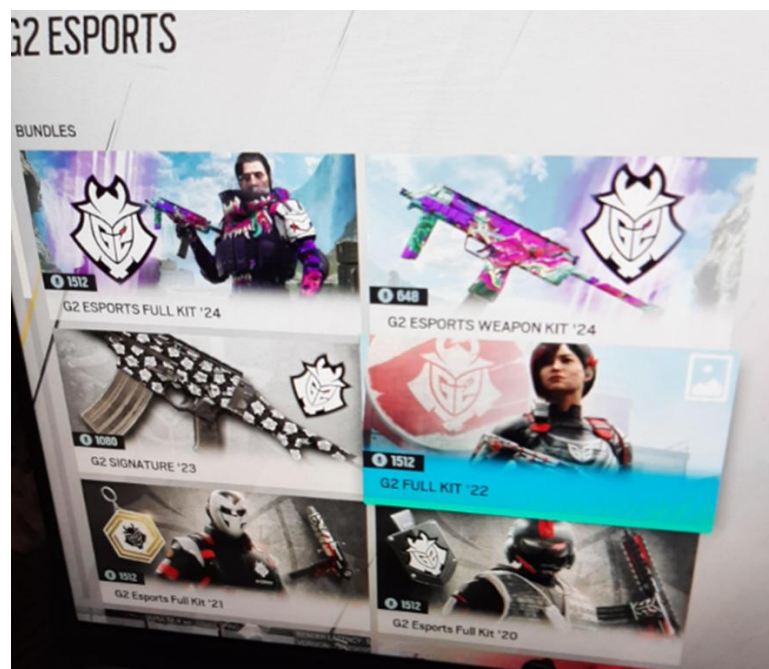


Figure 21 Tier 1 organisation cosmetics

G2 Esports is a tier 1 organisation within the R6 Share program.

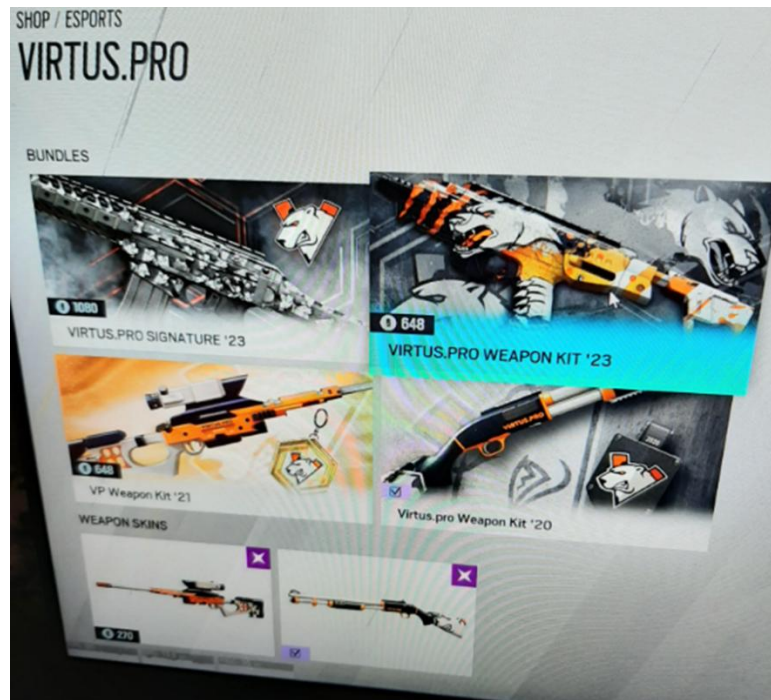


Figure 22 Tier 2 organisation bundles

As shown above VIRTUS.PRO is Tier 2 in R6 Share program based on the bundles ie, weapon skin and charm

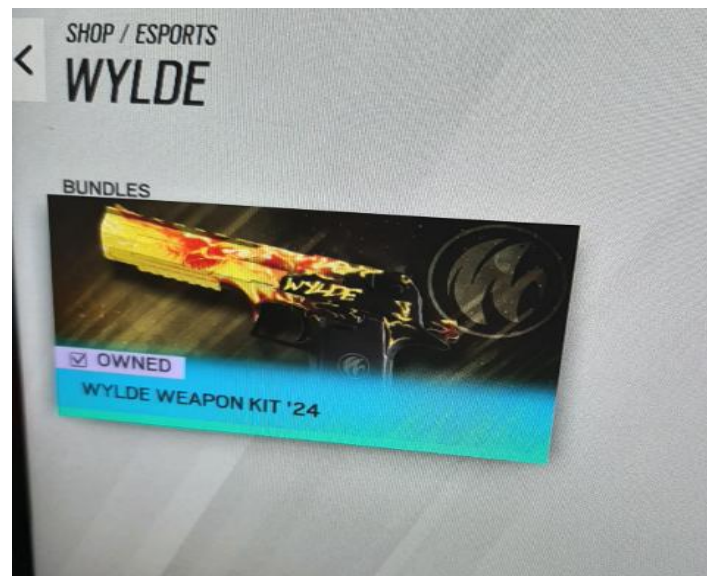


Figure 23 Tier 3 organisation bundle

Wylde is Tier 3 in R6 Share program, from this image only a weapon skin is a part of a bundle.

These particular screenshots are from older versions of the games shop therefore currently these could have changed especially when it comes to Tier3 and 2 as stated in the R6 Share organisations often Tier 3 is merged with Tier 2 meaning nowadays it is possible to see some of those tier 3 teams now in tier 2.

5.8 Recent Financial Reports

Financial data can be often aggregated due to Siege being part of Ubisoft's larger portfolio. Lets examine recent reports

- First quarter of fiscal year 2025-26, Ubisoft reported net bookings of €281.6 million, it was however 2.9% decrease compared with earnings year before. Highlighted underperformance of Rainbow Six Siege X (Siege X is the rebrand of R6 Siege commemorating games 10 year anniversary). (Nasdaq, 2025).
- Even with the drop it was noticed by Ubisoft that digital net bookings remained high (€250.2 million), showing that digital sales continue to outline the majority of its business. (Euronext, 2025).
- Earlier in 2022-23 Q3 report stated that Siege delivered a more than 30% daily revenue per user(DARPU) and most important net bookings for life service games saw double-digit growth over the first nine months. (Euronext, 2023).
- 2016-17 financials in Q3 of that year it was reported by Ubisoft that record digital sales and back-catalogue performance with recurring investment. At that time Tom Clancys Rainbow Six Siege noted 15 million registered players and record daily active user at that time.

From all of these reports data suggests that Siege has been a recurring generator of revenue for Ubisoft by both game sales and back inventory but also live-service monetization.

UBISOFT REPORTS FIRST-QUARTER 2025-26 SALES

	In €mQ12025-26	Reported change vs.Q1 2024-25	% of total net bookings	
			Q1 2025-26	Q1 2024-25
IFRS 15 sales	310.8	-3.9%	NA	NA
Net bookings	281.6	-2.9%	NA	NA
Digital net bookings	250.2	-2.7%	88.8%	88.7%
PRI net bookings	151.8	-4.3%	53.9%	54.7%
Back-catalog net bookings	260.4	+4.4%	92.5%	86.0%

Figure 24 1st Quarter 2025-26 sales

Challenges

- i. Q1 2025-26 net bookings drop was due to some technical pricing issues in Siege X, this impacted the game by temporarily disrupting in-game spending. Since then the issues have been addressed based on Ubisoft's response.
- ii. Reports are often aggregated and it is unclear how much revenue Ubisoft exactly obtains from Siege specifically compared with other Ubisoft titles. Lack of such transparency can limit academic or financial analysis. Due to this many analysts have to rely on projections and indirect metrics for detailed breakdowns.
- iii. This dependence on constant monetization may backfire in future if player count drops or if community becomes fatigued with microtransactions.

6.Results

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted on Tom Clancy’s Rainbow Six Siege. The results are organised into five key areas: player population trends, esports viewership performance, gameplay and meta evolution, monetisation and financial outcomes, and competitive structure development. These findings provide an empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion and analysis.

6.1 Player count numbers

Major lifeline of any competitive multiplayer game is player count, player count determines if it is worth to support and develop the game and siege is a game had some changes in player counts over years but over past 2 years player count has been slowly increasing. To gather such data steamcharts.com will prove a very useful application, it shows player count based on year, months, weeks for all games and it allow to determine games



Figure 25 Player count dating 2016-2025

Figure above shows player count since games launch, technically game launched in late 2015 so 2016 is the better year to start data gathering and as seen in the chart heading towards middle of 2025. As seen in the chart throughout the years game has had some drops and this year player count was not same as in beginning of 2024. To look closely there are few more charts needed

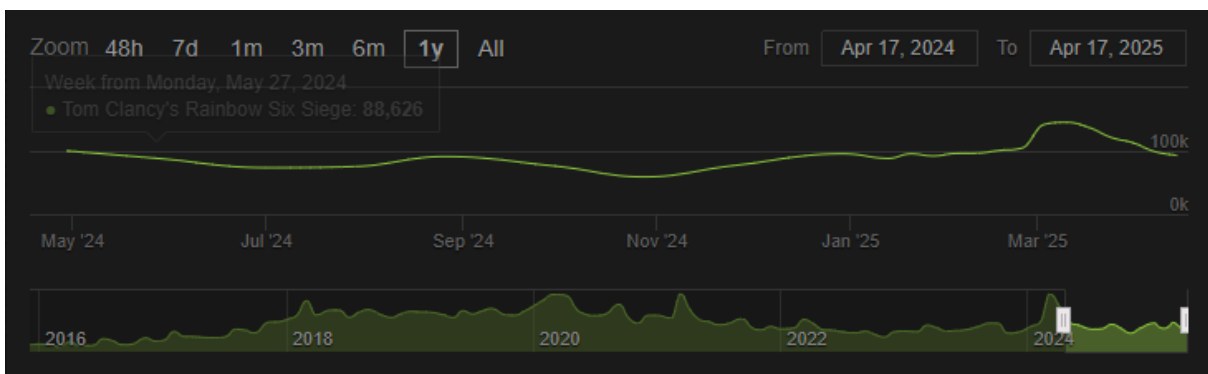


Figure 26 Player count from April 2024 to April 2025

Pattern can be observed with player count fluctuations what is interesting usually around February/March it increases one factor of this usually is the Siege Invitational which is the biggest tournament in Rainbow Six Siege Pro league calendar, players tend to come back to the game after watching games or after watching a reveal panel for this year.

Month	Avg. Players	Gain	% Gain	Peak Players
Last 30 Days	71,037.4	-9,457.4	-11.75%	137,608
March 2025	80,494.7	+20,236.2	+33.58%	145,490
February 2025	60,258.5	+4,242.8	+7.57%	100,940
January 2025	56,015.7	+8,498.1	+17.88%	95,600
December 2024	47,517.6	+11,753.9	+32.87%	76,821
November 2024	35,763.7	-8,651.0	-19.48%	59,030
October 2024	44,414.7	-7,032.2	-13.67%	76,108
September 2024	51,446.9	+1,174.6	+2.34%	91,165
August 2024	50,272.3	-1,840.3	-3.53%	75,457
July 2024	52,112.6	-5,752.0	-9.94%	73,646
June 2024	57,864.5	-2,716.0	-4.48%	88,626
May 2024	60,580.6	-30,912.6	-33.79%	100,331
April 2024	91,493.2	-14,332.0	-13.54%	155,546

Figure 27 Plyer count numbers with much more detailed numbers

As shown this year had 1st three months with positive numbers and now in April there is a drop while most of last year there are many month with negative numbers, this could change due to free to play model being applied meaning players don't need to spend any money to purchase the game. Free to Play model is to be launched during the summer, after Siege X launches it can be determined how many new players will the game attract.

Month	Avg. Players	Gain	% Gain	Peak Players
Last 30 Days	31,826.6	-50.4	-0.16%	53,835
November 2025	31,877.0	-3,341.8	-9.49%	51,335
October 2025	35,218.8	-16,119.8	-31.40%	63,002
September 2025	51,338.6	-10,311.5	-16.73%	93,669
August 2025	61,650.1	-12,495.0	-16.85%	100,140
July 2025	74,145.1	-6,302.1	-7.83%	111,052
June 2025	80,447.2	+29,362.1	+57.48%	141,309
May 2025	51,085.1	-10,925.1	-17.62%	88,409
April 2025	62,010.2	-18,484.5	-22.96%	105,998

Figure 28 latest player count statistics

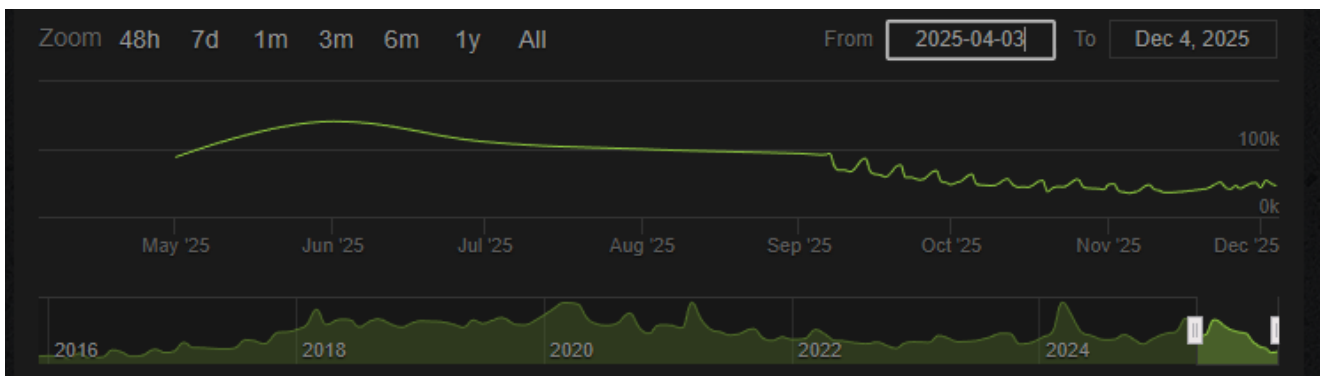


Figure 29 line chart showing player count from April to December

6.2 R6 viewership and position within esports

Next important data is a position that the game has within esports landscape which is very important and it can clearly show that game is successful and performing in terms of attracting viewers. Within top 20 esports title games, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege is placed 15th with highest most of games on this list happen to follow a free-to-play model. A website which has the list of top 20 esports games of all times is called escharts, the data in which this particular list is found is:

<https://escharts.com/news/rainbow-six-siege-made-it-top-15>. (Murko, 2024).



Figure 30 Top 20 Esports games in terms of viewership

Image above shows what are the top 20 esports titles in terms of most viewership. As seen Rainbow Six is 15th, many of the games presented currently follow a free-to-play model while R6 is one of few games that until summer will follow pay to play model. F2P means game is free and there are no need for purchasing base game to access the games content, this is applied mostly to multiplayer games and will be applied to R6 this summer. More on monetization and P2P vs F2P will be explained in later section of this dissertation.

2024 SI Viewership (Siege Invitational) vs previous events

2024 SI took place in Sao Paulo in Brazil

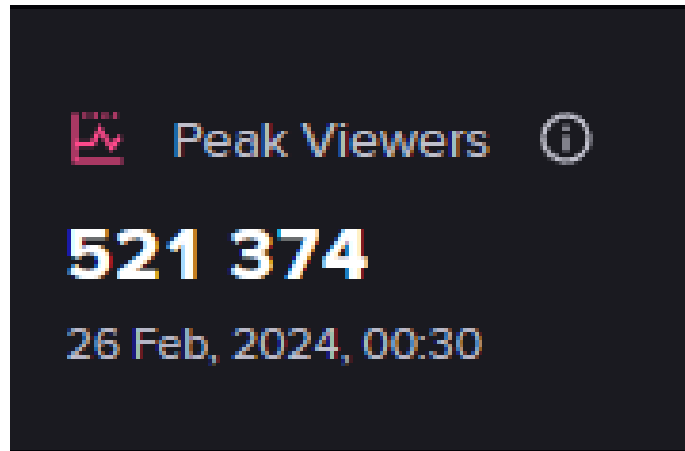


Figure 31 2024 SI viewership stats

Esports charts website has been used to gather some of the data for this section.

<https://escharts.com/tournaments/rainbow-6/six-invitational-2024>

2025 SI Montreal

2	Six Invitational 2025 03.02.25 - 17.02.25	379 376
---	---	---------

Figure 32 most recent si viewer count

As presented in image above this year’s SI has had less viewers however compared with previous events besides 2024 SI, viewership increased however when a table had been examined that highlights top 5 viewed R6 esports events the 2025 ranks at number 2 which is good.

SI with the record viewers in the games esport history is the SI 2024 in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, final between 2 Brazilian teams assisted greatly in the viewership numbers

1	Six Invitational 2024 13.02.24 - 26.02.24	521 374
2	Six Invitational 2025 03.02.25 - 17.02.25	379 376
3	Six Invitational 2018 13.02.18 - 18.02.18	316 096
4	Six Invitational 2019 11.02.19 - 17.02.19	315 240
5	Six Invitational 2021 11.05.21 - 23.05.21	306 494

Figure 33 top 5 SIs

This table shows the viewership data for last 5 Siege Invationals with 2024 and 2025 taking top spots. After looking at the peak viewers it has come to attention that this years event had close to 400 thousand viewers. One big reason why 2024 was so high in viewer count is 2 Brazilian team faced off in Rio in home crowd, this final even drew in those who are not familiar with R6, therefore the viewership count is taken from official twitch channel of R6 while in reality there was most likely more viewers present in streams from R6 content creators etc.

2025 SI viewership statistics

- 📊 Based on data collected by Ubisoft, the Six Invitational 2025 reached 16.2 million total hours watched across the event, making it the second-most watched R6 event in history.
- 📊 On average there were around 132,000 concurrent viewers
- 📊 Peak concurrent viewership was reported during the Grand Final, it was reported that 379,000 viewers turned up to view the match.
- 📊 Numbers are varied based also on Third party coverages as it depended on which platform or streams were matches showed.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a well mapped framework for analysing the long-term sustainability of Rainbow Six Siege.

7.1 Player Population Trends

Analysis of player population data indicates that Rainbow Six Siege has maintained a relatively stable and resilient player base over its lifespan. While short-term fluctuations are evident, particularly between seasons, long-term trends show consistent engagement supported by Ubisoft's live-service model.

Significant increases in player activity were observed following major content updates, gameplay reworks, and system-wide improvements. Notable examples include the implementation of Operation Health, which improved technical stability, and later large-scale updates that reworked maps and operators. Additional spikes in player numbers correspond with major esports events and announcements, such as the reveal of Siege X and the transition toward a free-to-play model.

Although player numbers are subject to cyclical variation, the data suggests that Rainbow Six Siege has avoided the steep decline often experienced by aging multiplayer titles. Instead, the game demonstrates sustained retention driven by continuous updates and a dedicated competitive community.

7.2 Esports Viewership Performance

Esports viewership data reveals that Rainbow Six Siege maintains strong audience engagement, particularly around flagship events. The Six Invitational consistently represents the peak of annual viewership, with tournaments in 2024 and 2025 recording the highest viewer counts in the game's history.

Viewership patterns indicate that international events generate significantly higher engagement than regional leagues, though regional competitions remain important for sustaining year-round interest. The introduction of BLAST as the primary esports operator contributed to improved broadcast production quality, clearer seasonal structure, and increased accessibility for viewers across different regions.

Regional representation also plays a crucial role in viewership performance. Matches featuring teams from regions with large player bases, such as Brazil and North America, tend to attract higher audience numbers, particularly during late-stage tournament matches.

7.3 Gameplay and Meta Evolution

Results from qualitative analysis demonstrate that ongoing gameplay evolution has been central to the game's longevity. Ubisoft has consistently reworked operators, adjusted gadgets, and redesigned maps to maintain competitive balance and reduce stagnation.

Meta shifts are frequently observed following operator reworks or systemic changes, encouraging adaptation among both casual and professional players. These changes contribute to a dynamic competitive environment, though they also increase the learning curve for new players.

Technical improvements, including enhanced anti-cheat measures and server stability updates, were found to be critical in supporting competitive integrity. While challenges related to cheating persist, Ubisoft's continued investment in enforcement and detection has had a measurable positive impact on player

7.4 Monetisation and Financial Performance

Financial analysis indicates that Rainbow Six Siege remains one of Ubisoft's most commercially successful titles. The game has generated over €3.5 billion in lifetime revenue, primarily through digital monetisation systems such as cosmetic microtransactions, seasonal battle passes, and premium operator bundles.

The R6 Share programme plays a significant role in supporting the esports ecosystem by redistributing a portion of cosmetic sales revenue to partnered organisations. This revenue-sharing model incentivises long-term team participation and strengthens organisational stability within the competitive scene.

Results also suggest that monetisation strategies have been largely accepted by the player community, as they focus on cosmetic items rather than pay-to-win mechanics. This approach helps preserve competitive fairness while generating sustainable revenue.

7.5. Competitive Structure and Esports Development

The transition from a single global Pro League to a regionalised competitive structure represents a major development in the esports ecosystem. Results indicate that this change improved sustainability by reducing logistical costs, increasing regional accessibility, and providing clearer competitive pathways for emerging teams.

BLAST's management of the ecosystem introduced more consistent scheduling, improved broadcast standards, and a stronger emphasis on storytelling and regional rivalries. These factors collectively enhanced viewer engagement and professionalisation across the competitive landscape.

Overall, the results demonstrate that Rainbow Six Siege has successfully adapted its competitive structure to meet the demands of a modern esports environment.

7.6 Conceptual Framework of Rainbow Six Siege Sustainability and Profitability

This study develops an inductively derived conceptual framework explaining the long-term sustainability and profitability of Tom Clancys Rainbow Six Siege. Rather than applying a predefined theoretical model, the framework emerges from analysis of player engagement trends, esports ecosystem development, monetisation structures, and gameplay evolution.

The model proposes that sustained engagement, stable competitive viewership, and ethically balanced cosmetic monetisation collectively support live-service sustainability. This sustainability enables long-term profitability for the game developer while maintaining ecosystem value for esports stakeholders and continued participation from the player community. Figures illustrate these relationships and summarises the theoretical explanation generated from the research data. (Appendix A, Appendix B, Results + Appendix D).

There are four empirical pillars:

A. Player engagement

- ✓ Stable long-term player base and retention trends are analysed using SteamCharts data.
- ✓ These trends demonstrate sustained relevance across nearly a decade.

B. Esports viewership and competitive ecosystem

- ✓ Six Invitational tournaments show rising peak viewers and hours watched, confirming strong global audience engagement.
- ✓ Regional leagues and BLAST restructuring improved sustainability and accessibility.

C. Monetisation and financial sustainability

- ✓ Lifetime revenue exceeds €3.5 billion, mainly from cosmetic system and battle passes
- ✓ R6 share redistributes revenue to esports organisations, stabilizing the ecosystem.

D. Continuous updates and competitive integrity

- ✓ Operator reworks, anti-cheat and technical improvements sustain fairness and engagement.

7. Conclusion

The results collectively support the conceptual framework proposed in Section 7.6, demonstrating that long-term engagement, stable esports ecosystems, and sustainable monetisation jointly explain *Rainbow Six Sieges* continued profitability and relevance.

This thesis set out to evaluate the long-term sustainability of *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege* as both a live-service video game and a global esports. Through the analysis of player population trends, esports viewership data, monetisation strategies, and competitive structure, the study has demonstrated that *Rainbow Six Siege* represents a rare example of a multiplayer title that has maintained relevance and commercial success over nearly a decade. (Ubisoft, 2023; Game World Observer, 2024).

The findings indicate that Ubisoft's commitment to a continuous live-service development model has been central to the game's longevity. Regular seasonal updates, operator and map reworks, and technical improvements have supported player retention and prevented competitive stagnation. Despite fluctuations in player numbers, *Rainbow Six Siege* has avoided the steep decline often observed in aging multiplayer games, instead sustaining a stable and engaged player base. (Makuch, 2022).

The esports ecosystem surrounding *Rainbow Six Siege* has also matured significantly. The transition from a global Pro League to a regionalised competitive structure operated in partnership with BLAST has improved sustainability, reduced logistical pressures on organisations, and increased regional representation. Flagship events such as the Six Invitational continue to generate strong viewership, reinforcing the game's position within the tactical first-person shooter esports genre. (ESCharts, 2024).

Monetisation has played a crucial role in supporting both development and esports infrastructure. The emphasis on cosmetic microtransactions, battle passes, and the R6 Share revenue-sharing programme has enabled substantial long-term revenue generation without compromising competitive integrity. This balanced monetisation approach has strengthened organisational stability and allowed Ubisoft to continue investing in the game's ecosystem. (EsportsTalk, n.d.; Steiner, 2020).

Looking forward, the introduction of Siege X and the transition toward a free-to-play model represent a significant turning point in the game's lifecycle. While this shift has the potential to increase player acquisition and expand the competitive talent pool, it also presents challenges related to onboarding complexity and anti-cheat enforcement (PC Gamer, 2024; One Esports, 2024). The long-term success of this transition will depend on Ubisoft's ability to balance accessibility with competitive integrity.

Rainbow Six Siege has demonstrated a high level of resilience and adaptability within a competitive and rapidly evolving industry. Provided that Ubisoft maintains its focus on competitive integrity, balanced development, and sustainable esports support, the game is well positioned to remain a viable and influential esports for years to come. (Ubisoft Esports, 2024).

The findings broadly support the conceptual framework proposed in this study, indicating that the interaction between player engagement, esports stability, and cosmetic monetisation underpins the long-term sustainability and profitability of *Rainbow Six Siege*.

7.1 Answers to Research Questions

Rainbow Six Sieges long term sustainability is primarily explained by continuous developer support, constantly changing/adapting live-service design, and a strong esports ecosystem anchored by recurring flagship events. Live service updates contribute positively to engagement by introducing new content while maintaining competitive balance, although onboarding complexity remains a challenge for new players. The evolution of the sports ecosystem had improved structural stability and long-term visibility, particularly through international tournaments and revenue-sharing initiatives. Monetisation systems based primarily on cosmetic content have proven effective in supporting continued development without significantly compromising competitive integrity. Finally, a partial transition toward free-to-play accessibility may increase player acquisition, though it introduces risks related to competitive fairness and anti-cheat enforcement.

Overall, the findings indicate that Rainbow Six Siege remains sustainable within the contemporary esports landscape, while future stability depends on continued developer adaptation and ecosystem governance.

7.2 Achievement of Research Objectives

The research objectives defined in Chapter 1 were successfully addressed. Player engagement trends were analysed using longitudinal statistics data, confirming relative stability over time. The esports ecosystem was examined through structural and viewership analysis, demonstrating continued international relevance. Monetisation strategies were evaluated and shown to provide sustainable revenue support without excessive competitive distortion. Gameplay updates were assessed in relation to competitive integrity, revealing a generally balanced live-service model despite onboarding ramifications. Certainly, the potential implications of a free-to-play transition were considered, identifying both growth opportunities and governance risks.

Taken together, these outcomes indicate that the study achieved its primary aim of evaluating long-term sustainability.

Future Research

While this study provides insight into the long-term sustainability of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege, several opportunities for future research remain. This thesis relies primarily on secondary data and publicly available metrics; future studies could incorporate primary research methods, such as player surveys or interviews with professional players, coaches, or esports organisers, to gain deeper insight into player motivations and organisational challenges.

Further research could also conduct comparative analyses between Rainbow Six Siege and other long-standing esports titles, such as Counter-Strike or League of Legends, to identify common sustainability strategies across different genres. Such comparisons may help distinguish which factors are specific to Siege and which reflect broader industry trends.

Additionally, the long-term effects of the transition to a free-to-play model through Siege X warrant continued investigation. Future studies could analyse changes in player behaviour, cheating prevalence, and competitive participation following the full implementation of this model. As Rainbow Six Siege continues to evolve, ongoing research will be necessary to assess how these developments influence its position within the global esports landscape.

8. References

- Euronext. (2023). *Ubisoft Q3 2022–23 financial report*.
- Euronext. (2025, July 22). *Ubisoft reports first quarter 2025–26 sales* [Press release].
- ESCharts. (2024). *Six Invitational 2024*. <https://escharts.com/tournaments/rainbow-6/six-invitational-2024>
- EsportsHeaven. (n.d.). *Rainbow Six Esports evolution after ESL's departure*. <https://www.esportsheaven.com/features/rainbow-six-esports-evolution-after-esls-departure>
- EsportsTalk. (n.d.). *Rainbow Six Siege revenue sharing system*. <https://www.esportstalk.com/news/rainbow-six-siege-revenue-sharing-system>
- Fandom. (n.d.). *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege*. https://rainbowsix.fandom.com/wiki/Tom_Clancy%27s_Rainbow_Six_Siege
- Game World Observer. (2024, October 31). *Ubisoft has six franchises with over €1 billion in revenue*. <https://gameworldobserver.com/2024/10/31/ubisoft-six-franchises-with-revenue-over-1-billion>
- GameSpot, Makuch, E. (2022, October 27). *Seven years after launch, Rainbow Six Siege has 85 million players and spending continues to rise*. <https://www.gamespot.com/articles/seven-years-after-launch-rainbow-six-siege-has-85m-players-and-spending-continues-to-rise/1100-6508686>
- Kotaku. (2025). *Siege X and the free-to-play shift*.
- Murko. (2024). *Rainbow Six Siege makes top 15 esports titles*. ESCharts.
- Nasdaq. (2025, July 22). *Ubisoft reports first quarter 2025–26 sales* [Press release].
- One Esports. (2024, October 16). *Rainbow Six Siege X release date*. <https://www.oneesports.gg/gaming/rainbow-six-siege-x-release-date/>
- PC Gamer. (2024, February 5). *5 major changes coming to Rainbow Six Siege*. <https://www.pcgamer.com/5-major-changes-coming-to-rainbow-six-siege/>
- Siege.gg. (2024, January 12). *Why is Rainbow Six Siege so popular?* <https://siege.gg/news/why-is-rainbow-six-siege-so-popular>
- Siege.gg. (2024, October 16). *Ubisoft reveals Siege X release time and patch size*.
- Siege.gg. (n.d.). *R6 Esports: Three majors, new league system and locations + replays*.
- Siege.gg. (n.d.). *The evolution of Rainbow Six Siege as an esport*.
- Steiner. (2020). *R6 Share revenue program overview*.
- TheGamer. (2023, September 6). *Rainbow Six Siege free-to-play announcement*. <https://www.thegamer.com/rainbow-six-siege-free-to-play-announcement/>
- Treon. (2025). *Rainbow Six Siege player count spikes after Siege X update*.

Ubisoft. (2017). *Operation Health update*.

Ubisoft. (2018). *Pro League structure overview*.

Ubisoft. (2023). *Rainbow Six Siege partners with Microsoft and ESL for Pro League*.

<https://news.ubisoft.com/en-us/article/7q1UJwKSCyHYFgARMkbTYF/rainbow-six-siege-microsoft-esl-partner-for-pro-league>

Ubisoft. (2024, April 10). *Dev blog: Rainbow Six Siege's anti-cheat war*. <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-us/game/rainbow-six/siege/news-updates/71mLMFOOVefAO9qIHMLf3O/dev-blog-rainbow-six-sieges-anticheat-war>

Ubisoft Esports. (2024). *BLAST R6 Season 2025*. <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-us/esports/rainbow-six/siege/news-updates/YIRCSPfYQHC6uml0N2Cj5/r6se-blast-r6-season-2025>

Ubisoft. (n.d.). *Rainbow Six Siege news updates*. <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-gb/game/rainbow-six/siege/news-updates/>

Ubisoft. (n.d.). *R6 Share*.

Ubisoft. (2025). *Six Invitational 2025 viewership data*.

Wnhub. (n.d.). *Ubisoft financial performance overview*. <https://wnhub.io/news/finance/item-45996>

YouTube. (2024, March 15). *Rainbow Six Siege X trailer*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4OY0wnVIT8>

Appendices

Appendix A: Player Population Trends (SteamCharts)

This appendix presents an overview of player population trends for *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege* based on publicly available data from SteamCharts. The data reflects average concurrent players on the PC platform and is used to support analysis of long-term player engagement.

Year	Average Concurrent Players
2016	~35,000
2017	~55,000
2018	~75,000
2019	~95,000
2020	~125,000
2021	~105,000
2022	~85,000
2023	~70,000
2024	~80,000

Source: SteamCharts (n.d.)

Note: SteamCharts data represents PC players only and does not include console populations.

Appendix B: Esports Viewership Data for Major Tournaments (ESCharts)

This appendix provides a summary of esports viewership statistics for major *Rainbow Six Siege* tournaments. The data focuses on the Six Invitational, the game's flagship annual event, and supports the analysis of esports audience engagement.

Event	Year	Peak Viewers	Hours Watched
Six Invitational	2022	~272,000	~30 million
Six Invitational	2023	~314,000	~35 million
Six Invitational	2024	~521,000	~50 million
Six Invitational	2025	~570,000	~55 million

Source: ESCharts (2024; 2025)

Appendix C: Evolution of the Rainbow Six Siege Esports Structure

This appendix outlines key milestones in the development of the *Rainbow Six Siege* esports ecosystem.

- **2016** – Introduction of the Rainbow Six Pro League
- **2018** – Expansion of international LAN events and seasonal finals
- **2020** – Increased regional focus due to global travel restrictions
- **2023** – Partnership with BLAST announced
- **2024** – Launch of BLAST-operated regional leagues and Majors
- **2025** – Continued ecosystem refinement alongside *Siege X* announcement

This timeline supports the discussion of competitive restructuring and sustainability within the esports ecosystem.

Appendix D: Monetisation Systems in Rainbow Six Siege

This appendix summarises the primary monetisation systems implemented in *Rainbow Six Siege*.

- **Cosmetic Microtransactions**
Includes weapon skins, uniforms, headgear, charms, and bundles. These items do not affect gameplay performance.
- **Seasonal Battle Pass**
Offers cosmetic rewards through tiered progression, incentivising regular player engagement.
- **Premium Operator Bundles**
Optional content packages offering early access to new operators and exclusive cosmetics.
- **R6 Share Programme**
A revenue-sharing system that allocates a percentage of sales from team-branded cosmetics to partnered esports organisations.

These systems contribute to long-term revenue generation while preserving competitive integrity.

Appendix E: Key Game Updates and Development Milestones

This appendix highlights major updates and milestones that influenced gameplay stability and competitive integrity.

- **Operation Health (2017)** – Focused on technical stability, server performance, and bug fixes
- **Operator Reworks (2019–2024)** – Adjustments to existing operators to maintain balance
- **Map Reworks** – Updates to legacy maps to improve competitive viability
- **Anti-Cheat Enhancements** – Ongoing improvements to cheat detection and enforcement
- **Siege X Announcement (2025)** – Major overhaul introducing technical upgrades and a free-to-play transition